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# Observed and Estimated Bycatch of Green Sturgeon in 2002–17 U.S. West Coast Groundfish Fisheries

**July 2020**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

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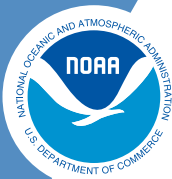
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Cover image: Fishery observer Kevin Stockmann scans a green sturgeon to detect for a possible implanted PIT tag. Gulf of the Farallones, California, July 2012. Photograph by F. Licata, commercial fisher.

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**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# Observed and Estimated Bycatch of Green Sturgeon in 2002–17 U.S. West Coast Groundfish Fisheries

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## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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## Executive Summary

This report presents observed and estimated bycatch of green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*) in fishery sectors observed by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) and the At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP) from 2002–17. Three federal groundfish fisheries observed by WCGOP and A-SHOP encountered green sturgeon between 2002 and 2017: the limited entry (LE) bottom trawl fishery (active 2002–10), the individual fishing quota (IFQ) bottom trawl fishery (active 2011–17), and the at-sea hake fishery (active 2002–17).

The southern distinct population segment (Southern DPS) of North American green sturgeon was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2006, and landings and sales of green sturgeon have been prohibited since the effective date of the protective regulations (2 July 2010). The Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Biological Opinion (BiOp; NMFS 2012) states that incidental take of Southern DPS green sturgeon in the combined federally managed fisheries should not exceed more than 28 fish per year, with up to 86 takes allowed in no more than two years within a nine-year period. While the BiOp only concerns Southern DPS as a listed species, currently there is no direct method to distinguish between Southern and Northern DPS fish at sea. Based on data from WCGOP and A-SHOP, the observed take of all green sturgeon (regardless of DPS) in all federally managed sectors combined in the most recent five years (2013–17) ranged from 2–40 per year. These bycatch numbers are from fisheries with nearly 100% observer coverage. Some of these bycatch samples were analyzed with genetic stock identification (GSI) methods to differentiate between Northern and Southern DPS fish (C. Garza, NMFS/SWFSC, personal communication). The GSI analyses indicated that the proportions differed spatially between the DPSes, with 48% of green sturgeon caught off the Oregon and Washington coasts and 96% of individuals caught off the California coast assigned to the Southern DPS. Based on the individual assignments and the estimated DPS proportions from each area, the estimated number of Southern DPS green sturgeon encountered in the federally managed sectors for 2013–17 ranged from 1–16/yr. Annual estimates from 2002–17 are shown in Figure ES-1.

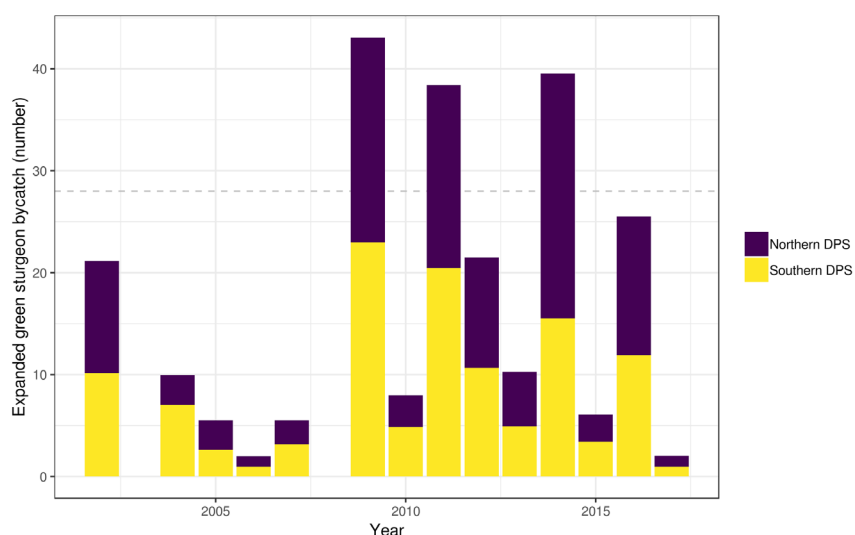


Figure ES-1. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (number of individuals) in federally managed groundfish fisheries by distinct population segment (DPS). Estimates of bycatch by DPS are calculated based on individual assignments of genetic stock identification (GSI) and GSI proportions by catch areas (48% Southern DPS for WA and OR, 96% Southern DPS for CA). The horizontal dashed line shows the annual limit of 28 Southern DPS individuals that may be taken each year by combined federal groundfish fisheries (NMFS 2012).

The BiOp only concerns federally managed fisheries. However, WCGOP also observes the state-managed California halibut and California nearshore fixed gear fisheries, both of which also encountered green sturgeon. We provide bycatch estimates of green sturgeon in the state-managed fisheries in a separate section of this report to provide a more thorough understanding of the impacts of observed fisheries on this species, but note that recommendations regarding green sturgeon under the BiOp should not include these fisheries.

# Federal Fisheries

## Introduction

In accordance with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS, or NOAA Fisheries) Biological Opinion (BiOp) on Continuing Operation of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery (NMFS 2012, pp. 126–127), this section provides observed bycatch and fleetwide take estimates of green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*) for all federal fisheries observed by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) and the At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP) from 2002–17. Since the start of the individual fishing quota (IFQ) program in 2011, IFQ fisheries have been observed at nearly 100% by onboard observers or electronic monitoring. From 2011–17, the observed bycatch represents a near-complete census of fleetwide total bycatch. This report does not include potential bycatch of green sturgeon in fisheries not observed by WCGOP or A-SHOP, such as tribal fisheries (except at-sea hake), recreational fisheries, and research fisheries.

## Green sturgeon background

Green sturgeon are a long-lived, slow-growing, anadromous fish species. They spend the majority of their adult lives in marine and estuarine environments, but migrate into rivers for spawning every 1–4 years. Between spawning runs, green sturgeon migrate along the west coast of North America, and can be found from Baja California to the Bering Sea. Due to their life history, wide distribution, and dependence on freshwater systems, green sturgeon are particularly susceptible to human-induced environmental changes, including impassable dams and barriers in spawning rivers, insufficient freshwater flows, non-native species, poaching, chemical contaminants, and entrainment by water projects (Adams et al. 2007).

Green sturgeon are separated into two distinct population segments (DPSes) based on spawning site fidelity and genetic information. The Northern DPS includes individuals spawning in the Rogue and Klamath–Trinity river systems, while the Southern DPS includes individuals spawning in the Sacramento River and its tributaries. Northern DPS fish do not appear to occur in natal waters of the Southern DPS and vice versa; however, the two DPSes overlap in marine and estuarine habitats. This is important because the Southern DPS is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), whereas the Northern DPS is not (USOFR 2006). Because green sturgeon from both DPSes are morphologically indistinguishable, physical tagging or genetic data are needed to determine to which DPS an individual belongs. The total population size of the Southern DPS is estimated at 12,614–22,482 individuals (1,246–2,966 adults, 6,540–15,571 subadults, and 2,595–6,179 juveniles; Mora et al. 2018), and the population of the Northern DPS is likely considerably larger (Adams et al. 2007).

In marine waters, adults and subadults primarily occur at depths of 40–110 m (Erickson and Hightower 2007). Once green sturgeon enter coastal habitats, they tend to migrate northward from their natal habitats (Erickson and Hightower 2007, Lindley et al. 2008). The coastal marine waters from Monterey Bay (California) to Vancouver Island (British Columbia, Canada) are recognized as the primary migratory habitat, and, in 2009, NOAA

Fisheries designated coastal marine waters within 60 fathoms (fth; approximately 110 m) from Monterey Bay to the U.S.–Canada border as critical habitat for the Southern DPS (USOFR 2009). NMFS also designated the Sacramento River system and the adjacent estuaries as critical habitat, as well as several coastal estuaries in California, Oregon, and Washington (USOFR 2009). Genetic and acoustic telemetry studies suggest that Northern and Southern DPS fish co-occur in large concentrations in the Columbia River estuary and in Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay, Washington. The proportions of Southern DPS fish in those estuaries were found to be moderate to high (41–81%), although they varied between years, between estuaries, and between the estimation methods (Israel et al. 2009). Genetic analyses on green sturgeon bycatch samples collected by observers for the years 2007–17 indicated that the proportions of Southern DPS fish varied between years and fishing areas (C. Garza, NMFS/SWFSC, personal communication). When data are aggregated across the years, about 48% of the green sturgeon sampled off Oregon and Washington and 96% of the green sturgeon sampled off California likely belonged to the Southern DPS.

## The west coast groundfish fishery

The west coast groundfish fishery is a multispecies fishery that utilizes a variety of gear types off the U.S. West Coast (California, Oregon, and Washington). This fishery harvests species designated in the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), and is managed by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC; PFMC 2016). Under the FMP, the groundfish fishery consists of four management components:

1. The limited entry (LE) component encompasses all commercial fishers who hold a federal limited entry permit. The total number of limited entry permits available is restricted. Vessels with an LE permit are allocated a larger portion of the total allowable catch for commercially desirable species than vessels without an LE permit.
2. The open access (OA) component encompasses federal commercial fishers who do not hold a federal LE permit. Some states require fishers to carry a state-issued permit for certain OA sectors.
3. The recreational component includes recreational anglers who target or incidentally catch groundfish species. Recreational fisheries are not included in this report.
4. The tribal component includes native tribal commercial fishers in Washington that have treaty rights to harvest groundfish. Tribal fisheries are not included in this report, with the exception of the tribal at-sea Pacific hake (*Merluccius productus*) fishery.

These components can be further subdivided into sectors based on gear type, target species, permit, and other regulatory factors (see Table 1-1 for details on selected sectors).

## The NWFSC Groundfish Observer Program

The goal of the NWFSC Groundfish Observer Program is to improve estimates of total catches and discards by observing commercial sectors of fisheries along the U.S. West Coast that target or incidentally take groundfish. Table 1-1 shows generalized descriptions of the sectors covered by this program. The program has two units: the West Coast Groundfish

Observer Program (WCGOP) and the At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP). WCGOP was established in May 2001 by NMFS in accordance with the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (USOFR 2001, implemented as 50 CFR Part 660). This regulation requires all vessels that catch groundfish in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from 3–200 miles offshore to carry an observer when notified to do so by NMFS or its designated agent. Subsequent state rule-making has extended NMFS’s ability to require vessels fishing in the 0–3 mi state territorial zone to carry observers.

WCGOP and A-SHOP observe distinct sectors of the groundfish fishery. WCGOP observes the following groundfish sectors: IFQ (formerly LE) shore-based delivery of groundfish and Pacific hake, LE and OA non-nearshore fixed gear, and state-permitted nearshore fixed gear. WCGOP also observes several state-managed fisheries that incidentally catch groundfish, including the California halibut trawl and ocean shrimp trawl fisheries. A-SHOP observes the IFQ fishery that processes Pacific hake at sea, including catcher–processor, mothership, and tribal vessels. Details on how fishery observers operate in both the IFQ and non-IFQ sectors can be found online on the [Fisheries Observation Science Program web page](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Amount and extent of take

The BiOp (NMFS 2012, pp. 121–122) states that:

[T]ake of threatened Southern DPS green sturgeon will occur as a result of the continued operation of the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery. Incidental take of Southern DPS green sturgeon is expected to occur as a result of incidental capture and handling in the fishery, mortalities resulting from encounter with fishing gear and/or removal of captured fish from the water, and handling by the NMFS observer program. Under the proposed action, incidental take of Southern DPS green sturgeon because of bycatch and handling in the fishery is not expected to exceed 28 fish per year; however, we recognize the potential for incidental take of greater numbers of Southern DPS green sturgeon in some years. Therefore, this take statement allows for incidental take of up to 86 Southern DPS green sturgeon per year in no more than 2 years within a period of 9 consecutive years.

While the ESA listing and BiOp only apply to Southern DPS green sturgeon, this report includes information on all green sturgeon bycatch due to our limited ability to assign bycatch observations to DPSes. We currently have no information on the recapture rate of the same individual green sturgeon or the level of mortality of green sturgeon after being caught, landed on the deck, observed, handled, and released by observers. However, most observed green sturgeon in the groundfish bottom trawl fisheries are released alive, and the BiOp assumes a 5.2% mortality rate for bycatch in the LE trawl sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/observation/index.cfm>

## Federal sectors that encountered green sturgeon

This section contains information from the LE and IFQ groundfish bottom trawl fishery and the at-sea hake fishery. No other federal sector covered by WCGOP or A-SHOP had observed green sturgeon bycatch during 2002–17. Starting in 2015, a portion of the IFQ fishery has been covered under the electronic monitoring (EM) program administered by the Pacific State Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC). This program has partial WCGOP observer coverage at sea and full video coverage that has been reviewed for the presence of green sturgeon. No green sturgeon bycatch was observed on the EM video system (C. Paiva, PSMFC, personal communication), and we consider this to be a complete accounting of bycatch in EM trips. For details on observer coverage and EM coverage, see WCGOP (2018).

## Methods

### Data sources

The analyses in this report use observer data from WCGOP, A-SHOP, and fish ticket data (i.e., landing receipts) from the Pacific Fisheries Information Network (PacFIN). For information on observer sampling protocols, see the WCGOP and A-SHOP manuals (NWFSC 2018, 2019). For information on how observer and fish ticket data are processed, see WCGOP (2017). Daily mean sea surface temperature (SST) data used in the bycatch models were obtained from the NOAA OI SST V2 High Resolution Dataset provided by NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, Earth System Research Laboratories, Physical Sciences Laboratory, Boulder, Colorado.<sup>2</sup>

### Bycatch estimation

We use ratio estimators to estimate fleetwide green sturgeon bycatch within each sector. This is a simple, widely used method for expanding observed discard rates to unobserved catches. The general method is to estimate the total amount of bycatch in a stratum as:

$$\text{Estimated bycatch} = \frac{\text{Observed bycatch}}{\text{Observed effort}} \times \text{Total effort}$$

The stratum typically represents some combination of fishery sector, year, state, and time of year (winter or summer, defined as November–April or May–October, respectively). The ratio of observed bycatch to observed effort is called the bycatch ratio, and the total effort is termed the expansion factor. In this report, bycatch is counted in units of individual fish and effort is measured as the total retained weight of the target species (California halibut, groundfish, or Pacific hake, depending on the sector).

In sectors without full observer coverage, we quantify uncertainty around our estimates using a nonparametric bootstrap procedure. This procedure randomly selects vessels that were observed within a stratum with replacement to create a sample with the same number

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<sup>2</sup> <https://psl.noaa.gov/data/gridded/data.noaa.oisst.v2.highres.html>



of vessels as the observed data. Random selection of vessels is intended to approximate the WCGOP vessel selection process. We calculate the bycatch ratio for each of 10,000 bootstrapped data sets to obtain a bootstrapped distribution of bycatch ratio estimates, and then determine the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles of the estimates. We then calculate the 95% confidence interval of fleetwide bycatch in the stratum by multiplying the confidence limits of the bycatch ratio by total landed weight of the target species in a given stratum. The lower confidence bound of the total fleetwide bycatch estimate is truncated at the observed bycatch amount if the estimated lower bound was less than the observed bycatch amount.

If fewer than three vessels are observed in a given stratum, we calculate the bycatch ratio and perform bootstrapping using data pooled across two adjacent strata to ensure confidentiality. The resulting ratio estimates can be viewed as a three-year running average (see Lee et al. 2017 for details). Further sector-specific methods are described below.

## Individual fishing quota bottom trawl

All IFQ fishing trips carry an observer, but a very small number of tows or a small portion of catch from a given tow may be unsampled due to observer illness or other circumstances. Less than 0.4% of all landings, on average, were unsampled over 2011–17 (WCGOP 2018). Three types of unsampled catch categories can occur during observed trips: completely unsorted catch (discards and retained), unsampled discards, and unsampled non-IFQ species. Both completely unsorted catch and unsampled discard could contain both IFQ and non-IFQ species, but unsampled non-IFQ species only contains species that are not managed as individual quota species. Estimates of green sturgeon bycatch for unsampled portion are derived per each unsampled category type separately using the ratio approach described above. We use the weight of the sampled catch as the denominator of the ratio and the weight of the unsampled catch as the expansion factor. Estimated bycatch from the unsampled portion of the catch is then added to the observed bycatch amount to obtain the total bycatch estimate. If no green sturgeon were encountered in a stratum, we assume no green sturgeon were encountered in the unsampled catch.

## At-sea hake trawl

We report observed and expanded bycatch data obtained directly from A-SHOP for each at-sea hake fishery sector (catcher-processors, motherships, and tribal catch delivered at sea). All vessels fishing in the at-sea hake fishery carry two A-SHOP observers for every fishing trip. On rare occasions, entire hauls might not be sampled due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., illness). These unsampled hauls are expanded at the stratum level. Typically, more than 99% of hauls are sampled each year (WCGOP 2018), so only a very small fraction of the unsampled portion needs expansion. The green sturgeon catch in unsampled hauls is estimated by multiplying the green sturgeon catch from the sampled hauls by the proportion of unsampled hauls over the total number of hauls per given stratum. This estimated green sturgeon catch for unsampled hauls is then added to the sum of all green sturgeon catch in the sampled hauls to produce the total estimated green sturgeon bycatch per given stratum.

## Genetic stock identification

Tissue samples collected by observers were analyzed by Dr. Carlos Garza (NMFS/SWFSC), and the resulting GSI data from 2007–17 were used to estimate the expanded bycatch numbers in each DPS. From the samples that have been analyzed, the overall proportion of Southern DPS was 48% for those bycatch samples ( $n = 92$ ) collected off Columbia River/Willapa Bay/Grays Harbor areas in the LE and IFQ bottom trawl fishery sectors, when calculated across all the available years. The proportion of Southern DPS was 96% for those green sturgeon bycatch samples ( $n = 306$ ) caught off San Francisco Bay/Half Moon Bay from the California halibut fishery sectors. Thus, the bycatch estimates not analyzed with GSI are multiplied by 0.48 for Washington and Oregon bycatch and by 0.96 for California to estimate the Southern DPS numbers per stratum. We apply the point estimates of DPS proportions to point estimates of expanded bycatch, so our estimates do not include uncertainty in bycatch or in DPS assignment.

## Length, season, and depth visualizations

When green sturgeon are encountered on vessels, observers document fish length (in fork length), weight, and general condition, take photographs, scan for scute markings and tags, and take a tissue sample. If the specimen is obviously dead, the observer will also take a fin ray sample and determine sex. For more information on sampling protocols, see the WCGOP and A-SHOP manuals (NWFSC 2018, 2019). We present visualizations of the length frequency to show the size structure of encountered green sturgeon, proportions of subadults/adults, and the relationship between green sturgeon size and fishing depth. Because green sturgeon undertake seasonal migrations (Lindley et al. 2008), we also visualized the seasonal patterns in bycatch in the trawl fisheries. We used monthly average bycatch ratio (the ratio of the observed number of green sturgeon to observed weight of landed target species) as a measure of seasonal bycatch risk. Both tow depth and Julian day were also used as predictors in bycatch probability models (see next section).

## Environmental correlates of bycatch

We use generalized additive models (GAMs) to explore the relationship between environmental covariates and green sturgeon bycatch. These are somewhat similar to the models presented by Lee et al. (2015), but we make several updates. First, we use GAMs instead of generalized linear models in order to allow for flexible nonlinear relationships between the response variable and predictors. Second, we include year and Julian day as predictors to account for potential interannual and seasonal influences on green sturgeon bycatch, and we use daily mean SST instead of daily SST anomaly. Third, we use haul duration as an effort offset. Finally, we modeled green sturgeon encounter probability using a binomial GAM as well as bycatch counts using a negative binomial GAM. Specifically, we fit the encounter model,

$$Y_i \sim \text{Bernoulli}(p_i)$$

$$\text{logit}(p_i) = s(\text{year}) + s(\text{average tow depth}) + s(\text{SST}) + s(\text{day}) + s(\text{latitude}) + \log(\text{haul duration}),$$



where  $Y_i$  is a binary variable representing green sturgeon presence or absence in tow  $i$  and  $s(\cdot)$  represents smooth functions. Similarly, we modeled counts as

$$N_i \sim NB(\mu_i, k)$$

$$\log(\mu_i) = s(\text{year}) + s(\text{average tow depth}) + s(\text{SST}) + s(\text{day}) + s(\text{latitude}) + \log(\text{haul duration}),$$

where  $N_i$  represents the observed green sturgeon count in tow  $i$  and  $\mu_i$  and  $k$  are the mean and dispersion parameters of the negative binomial distribution, respectively.

We used the R package `mgcv` to fit these models using restricted maximum likelihood, a basis size of 10, and an additional penalty on the null space of each smooth. This penalization allows for smooths to be removed from the model, effectively performing model selection. Daily mean SST data at a  $\frac{1}{4}^\circ$  resolution was obtained from the NOAA OI SST V2 High Resolution Dataset, and we used linear interpolation to estimate SST at each tow location. Following Lee et al. (2015), we fit the models to a subset of the LE/IFQ observer data that included tows between lat  $45^\circ\text{N}$  and  $47^\circ\text{N}$  with tow depths  $<60$  fth. We did this to exclude habitats where the fishery is very unlikely to encounter green sturgeon. We first fit models that also included bathymetry and a smoothed interaction between latitude and longitude, but found high concavity with tow depth, and therefore did not include these predictors. We also fit a Poisson model to the bycatch counts and found very similar results to the negative binomial model (albeit with slightly poorer model diagnostics), so we do not report those results here.

## Results and Discussion

### Bycatch overview

In 2002–17, green sturgeon were encountered in the following federal sectors and years:

- LE bottom trawl fishery (in 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010). Note that this fishery transitioned into the IFQ bottom trawl fishery in 2011.
- IFQ bottom trawl fishery (2011–17).
- At-sea hake fishery (in 2005 and 2006).

Estimated bycatch was higher in the LE/IFQ bottom trawl fishery than in the at-sea hake fishery. All other federal sectors covered by WCGOP had no observed green sturgeon bycatch. Figure 1-1 shows expanded bycatch estimates for all federal sectors in 2002–17.

Fishing effort in the LE/IFQ bottom trawl fishery was widely distributed from central California to northern Washington (Figure 1-2). Observed green sturgeon bycatch in this fishery was highest in southern Washington and northern Oregon, near the mouth of the Colombia River (Figure 1-2).

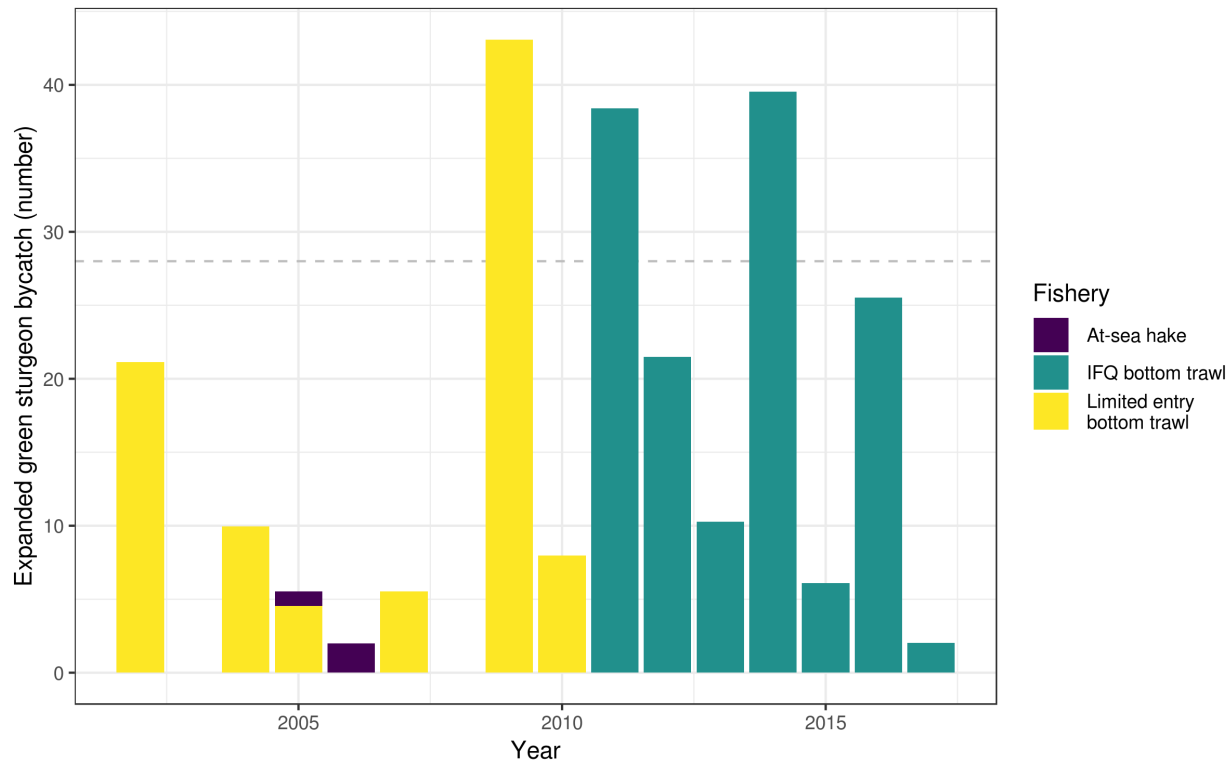


Figure 1-1. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (number of individuals) for all federal sectors covered by WCGOP and A-SHOP. The dashed line shows the annual limit of 28 Southern DPS individuals established by the BiOp.

## Genetic stock identification

The estimated numbers of Northern and Southern DPS individuals encountered by federal groundfish fisheries from 2002–17 are shown in Figure ES-1. The estimates for the IFQ fishery ranged from 1–16 per year over the most recent five-year period (2013–17; Table 1-2). This is well below the limit of 28 Southern DPS takes established by the BiOp. The at-sea hake fishery did not have any green sturgeon bycatch in 2013–17 (Table 1-3).

## Limited entry bottom trawl

Expanded green sturgeon bycatch numbers in the LE bottom trawl fishery (2002–10) are shown by state and time of year in Figure 1-3. Bycatch estimates, target landings, bycatch ratios, and coverage are presented in Table 1-4.

## Individual fishing quota bottom trawl

Expanded green sturgeon bycatch numbers in the IFQ bottom trawl fishery, 2011–17, are shown by state in Figure 1-4. Note that this fishery is observed at close to 100%. Bycatch estimates, target landings, bycatch ratios, and coverage are presented in Table 1-5.

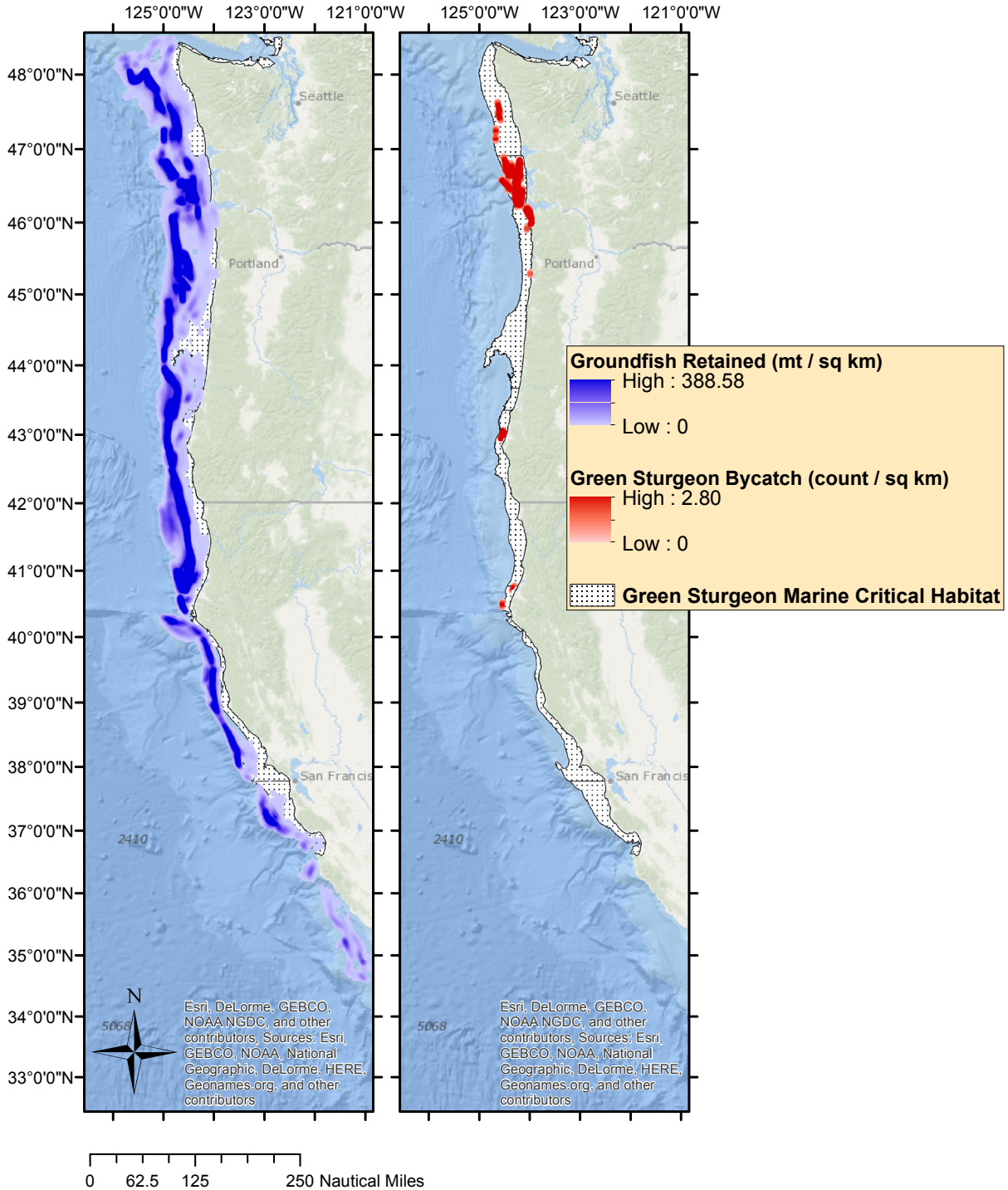


Figure 1-2. Map of observed fishing locations (left panel) and observed green sturgeon bycatch locations (right panel) in the limited entry and individual fishing quota bottom trawl sectors, based on observer data from 2002–17. Observer data are aggregated to 1-km<sup>2</sup> cells. Fishing locations are weighted by fishing effort (landed weight of groundfish). Green sturgeon bycatch locations are weighted by number of green sturgeon in the defined spatial cells. Cells containing fewer than three vessels are not shown to maintain confidentiality.

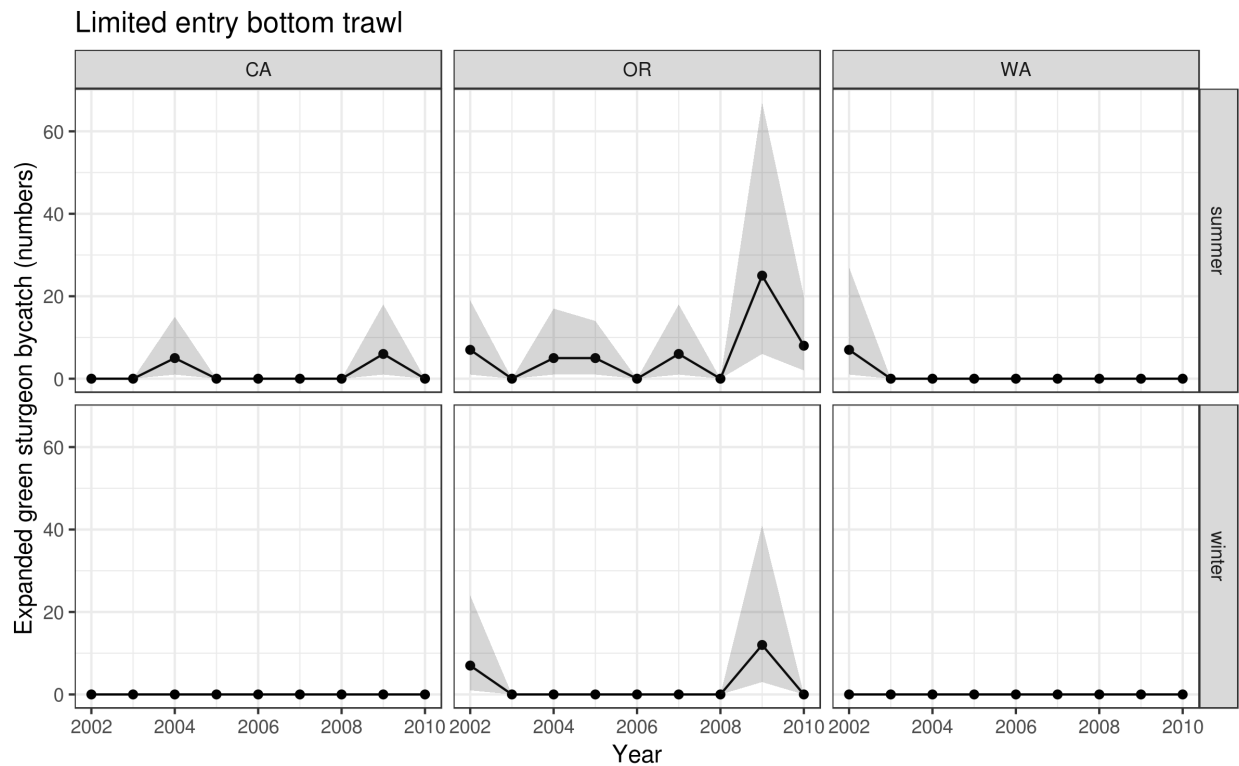


Figure 1-3. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (numbers of individuals) in the LE bottom trawl fishery by state and time of year, 2002-10. Winter = November–April, summer = May–October. Gray shading represents bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals.

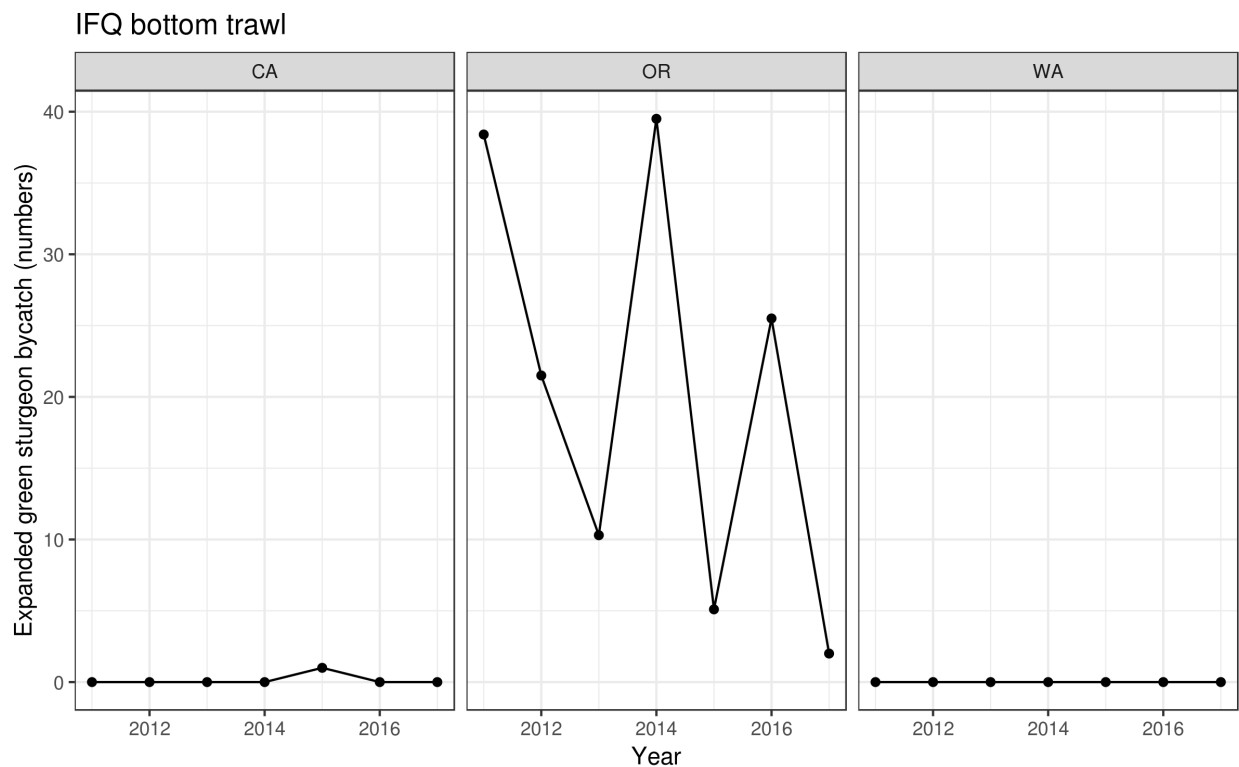


Figure 1-4. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (numbers of individuals) in the IFQ bottom trawl fishery by state, 2011-17. Note that this fishery has nearly 100% observer coverage.

## At-sea hake

Observed green sturgeon bycatch in the at-sea hake fishery is shown in Figure 1-5. Because of the high coverage rate, these values are equivalent to the expanded numbers. No bycatch of green sturgeon in this fishery has been observed since 2006. Bycatch estimates, target landings, bycatch ratios, and coverage are presented in Table 1-6.

## Tow depth and green sturgeon bycatch

Green sturgeon bycatch generally occurred in trawl depths of <40 fth in the LE/IFQ trawl fishery (Figure 1-6). This fishery operated at a wide range of depths, with a mean tow depth of  $208 \pm 132$  fth, suggesting that most tows are unlikely to encounter green sturgeon.

## Length frequencies

Green sturgeon fork lengths from all observations over 2002–17 ranged from 53–222 cm in the LE/IFQ trawl fishery. The majority of individuals encountered by the IFQ trawl sector were <140 cm (the estimated length at maturity), indicating that bycatch is dominated by subadults. The LE trawl sector encountered approximately equal numbers of subadults and adults (Figure 1-7); however, only 14 individuals were encountered in that sector.

## Length and depth

There was no apparent relationship between observed green sturgeon length and tow depth in the LE/IFQ fishery (Figure 1-8).

## Seasonal patterns

In the LE/IFQ bottom trawl fishery, average bycatch ratios were highest in the late winter/early spring (February and April) and late fall (November; Figure 1-9). This may be related to the seasonal migration patterns noted in this species (Lindley et al. 2008).

## Environmental correlates of bycatch

In the LE/IFQ trawl fishery, Julian day, tow depth, and year had the largest impacts on bycatch in our models (Figures 1-10 and 1-11). Latitude and SST had little to no effect in either model. Bycatch appeared to be highest in the spring at shallower tow depths. Deviance explained was 31.1% for the binomial encounter model and 43% for the negative binomial count model, indicating that these models do not fully capture the factors influencing bycatch. Further model results can be found in Tables 1-7 and 1-8.

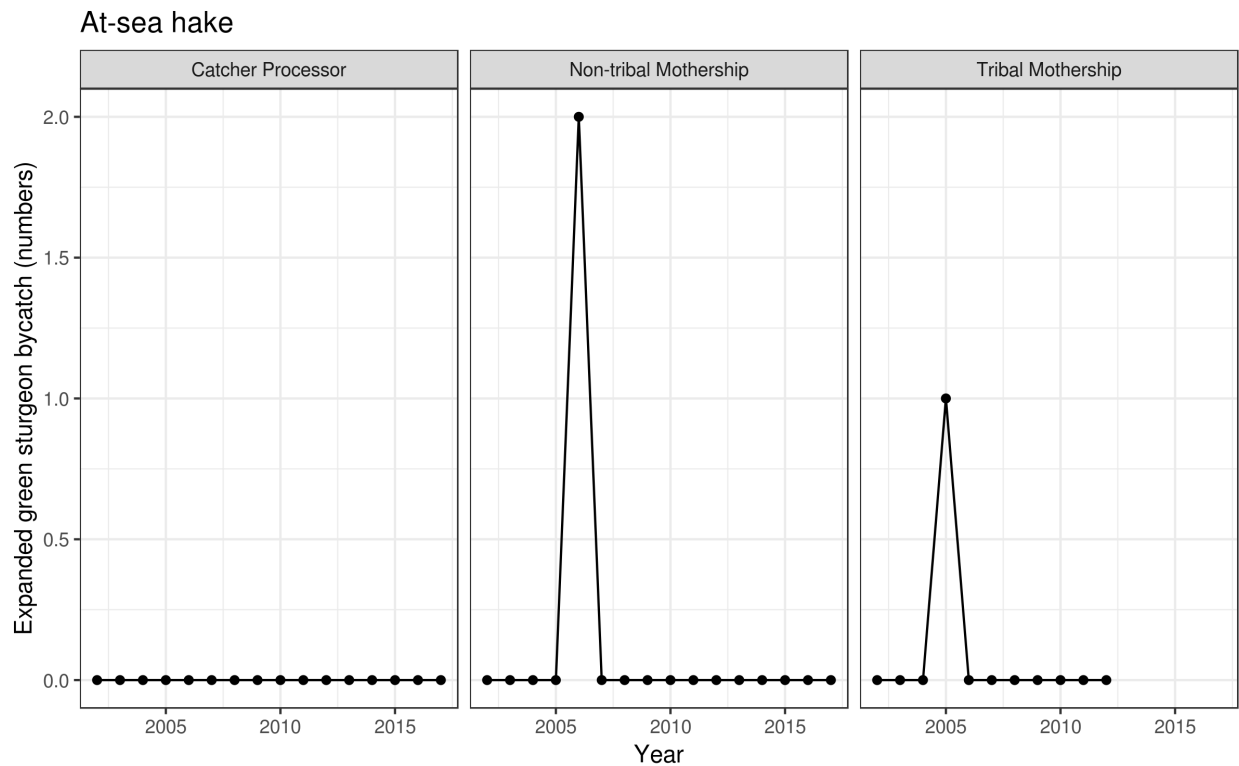


Figure 1-5. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (number of individuals) in the at-sea hake fishery by sector, 2002–17. Note that this fishery has nearly 100% observer coverage.

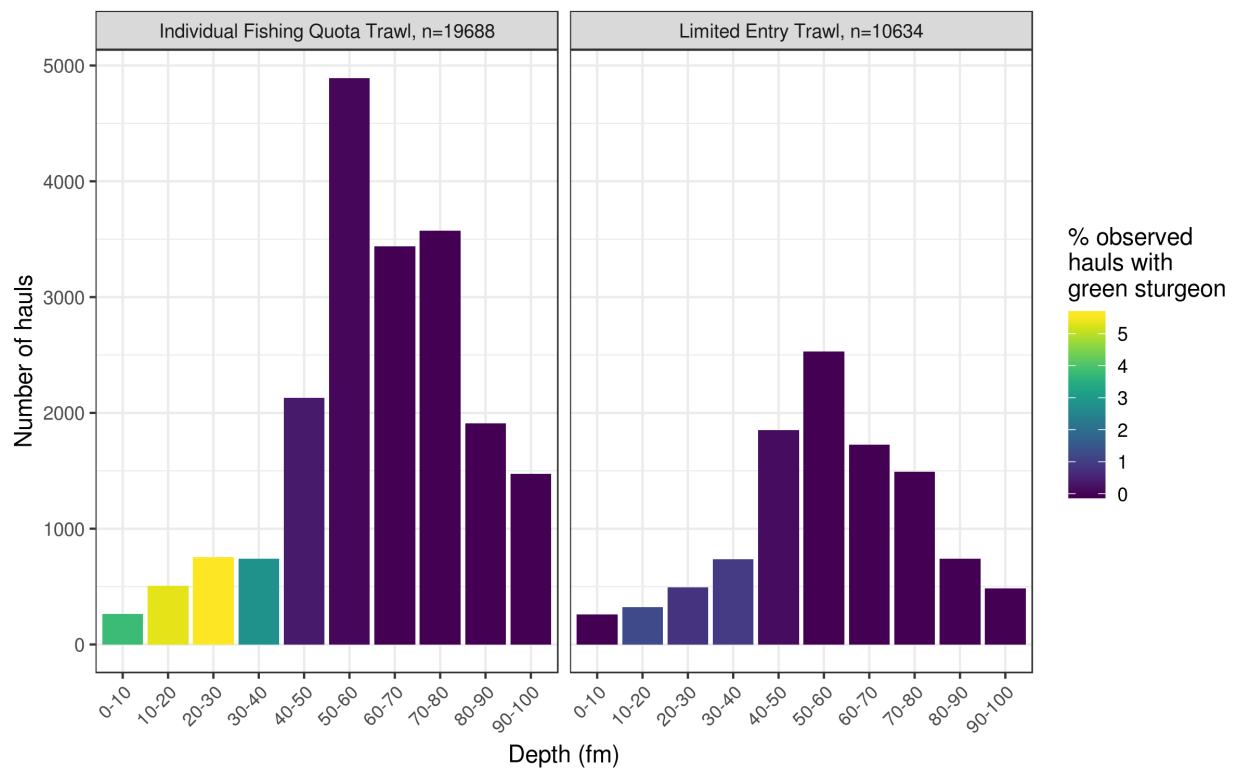


Figure 1-6. Distribution of observed haul depths and percent of hauls with green sturgeon in the IFQ and LE bottom trawl fisheries, 2002–17. Hauls deeper than 100 fth are not shown because they did not encounter green sturgeon.

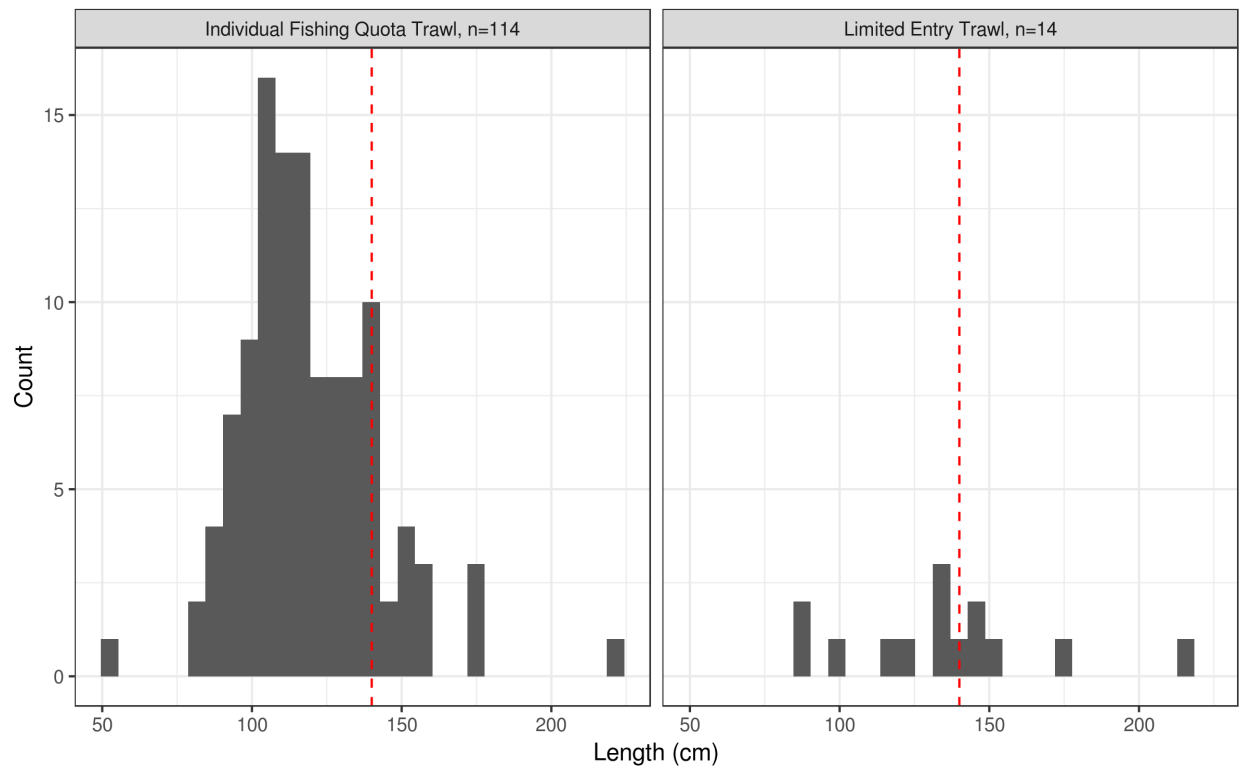


Figure 1-7. Distribution of observed green sturgeon lengths in the IFQ and LE bottom trawl fisheries, 2002–17. The dashed red lines indicate the boundaries between subadult and adult sizes (140 cm).

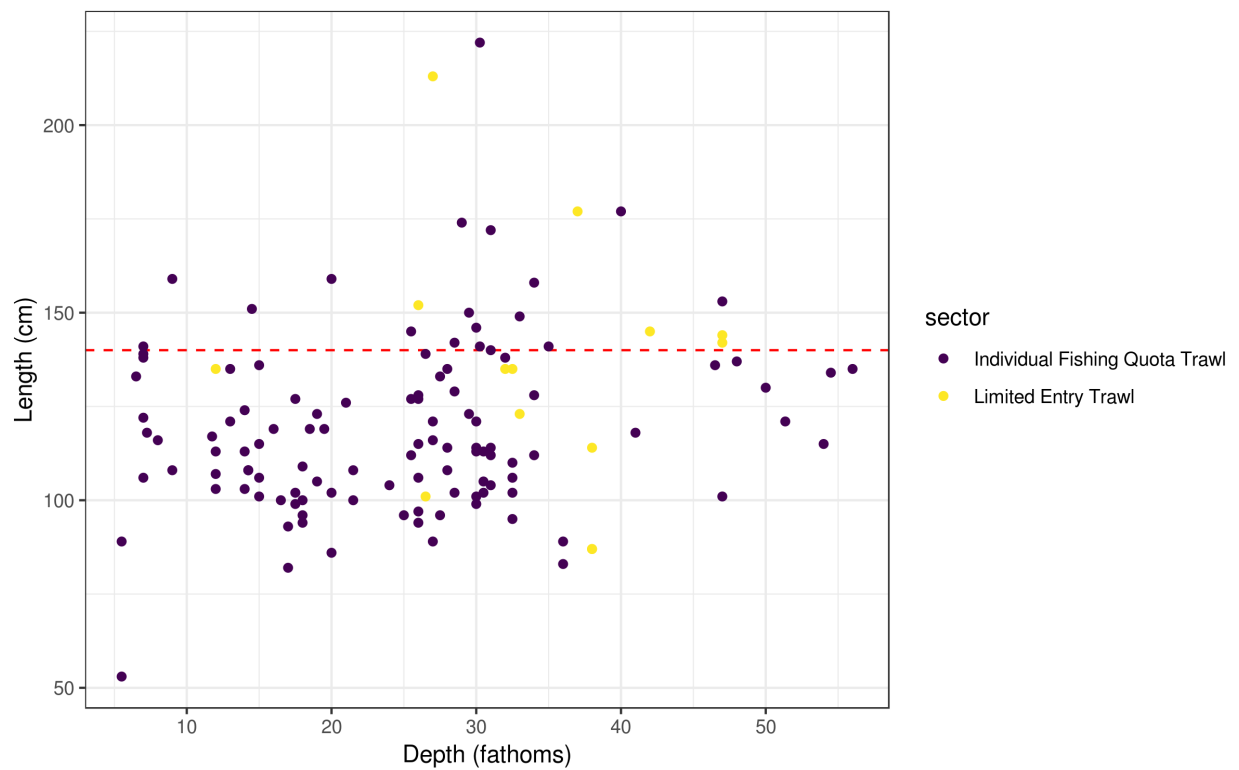


Figure 1-8. Scatter plot of green sturgeon lengths over average tow depths at capture in the LE and IFQ bottom trawl sectors. The dashed red line indicates the boundary between subadult and adult size (140 cm).

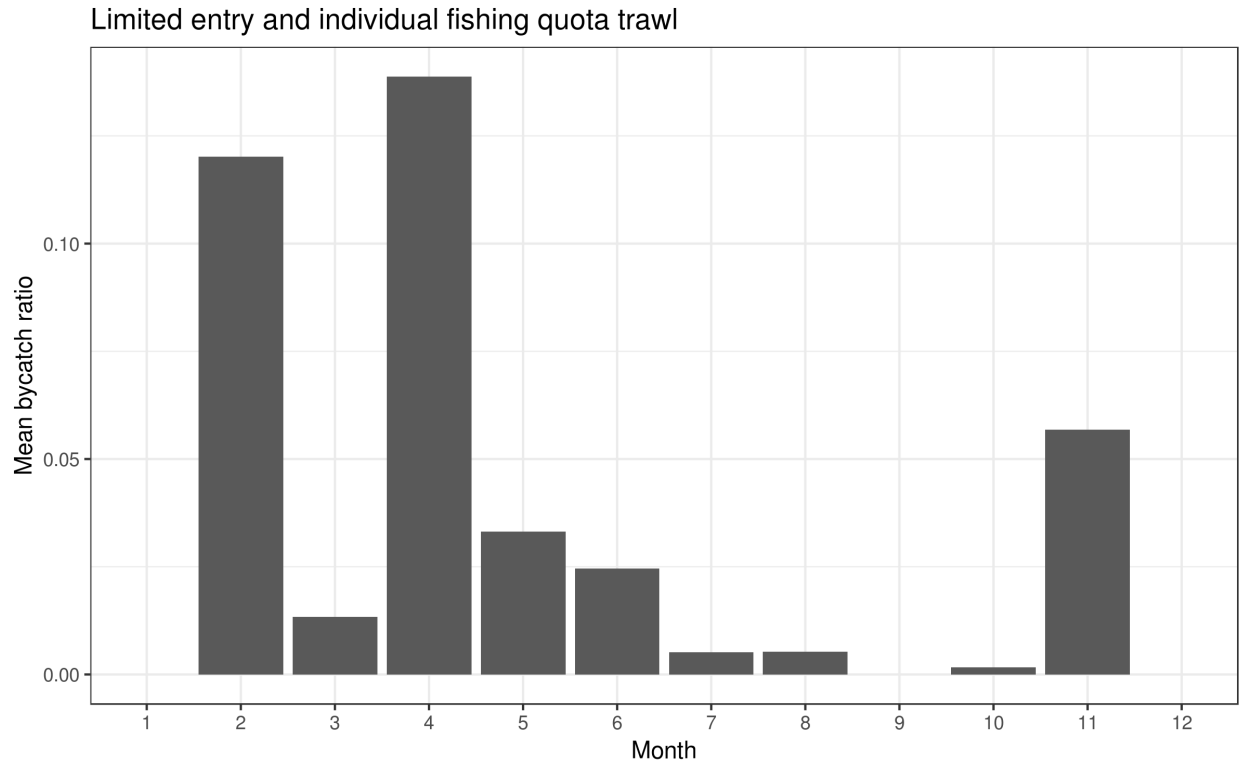


Figure 1-9. Mean bycatch ratio (number of green sturgeon caught divided by landed weight of groundfish) by month in the groundfish trawl fishery. IFQ and LE observations are combined across all years.

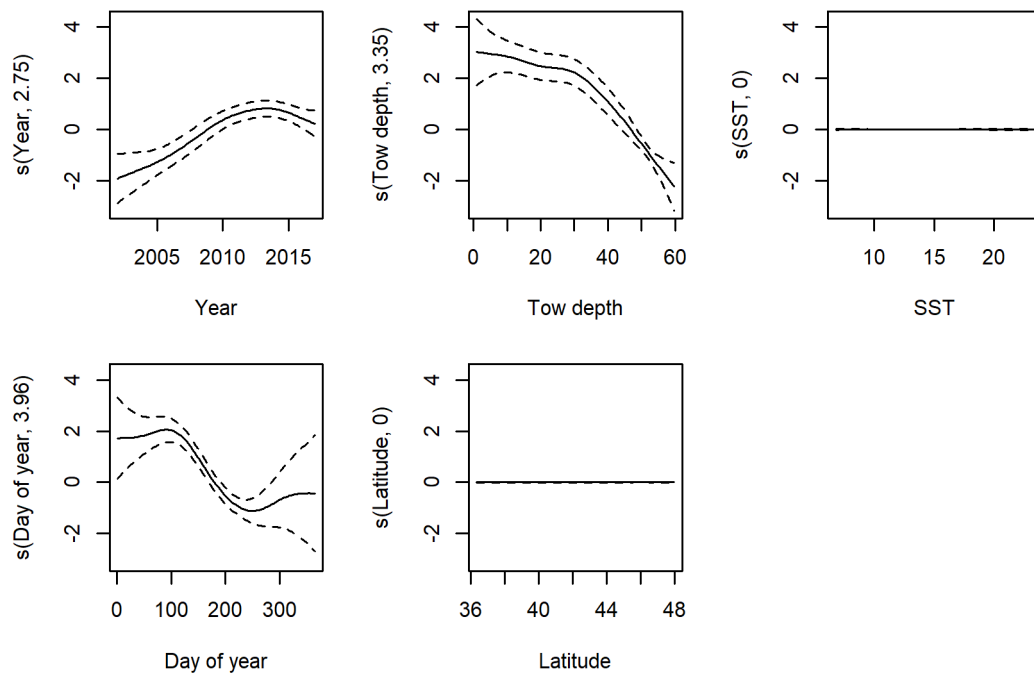


Figure 1-10. Estimated smooth functions for covariates in the binomial encounter probability model fit to LE and IFQ bottom trawl data. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals.



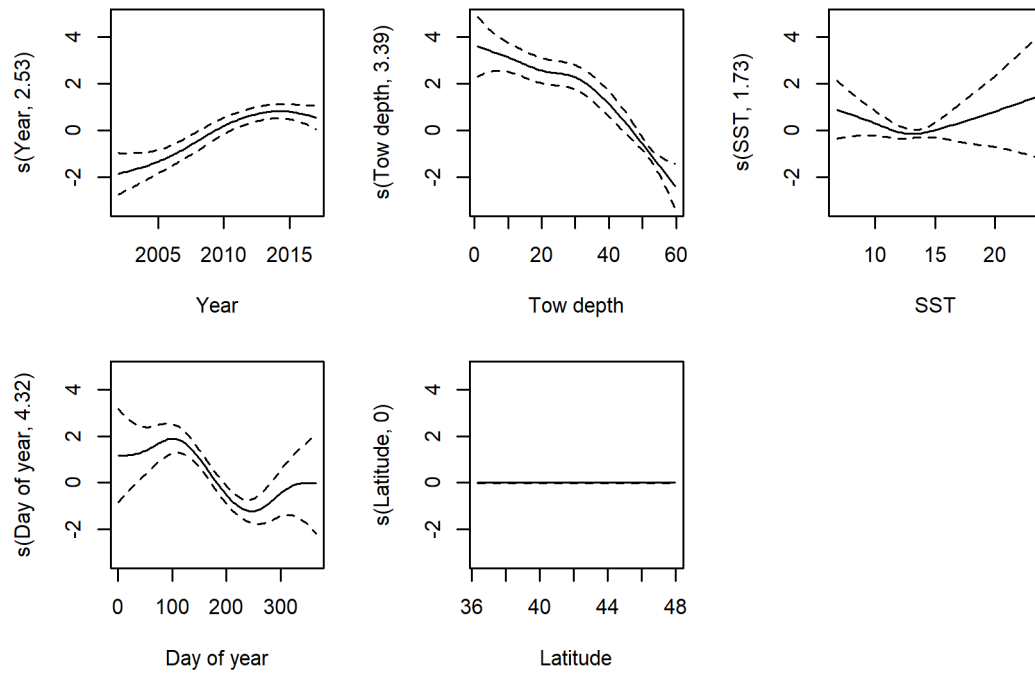


Figure 1-11. Estimated smooth functions for covariates in the negative binomial count model fit to LE and IFQ bottom trawl data. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

# Tables

## Sector descriptions

Table 1-1. Generalized descriptions of U.S. West Coast fisheries observed by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) and the At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP). Sectors that did not have observed green sturgeon bycatch at any time over 2002–17 are in gray, and sectors that did have observed green sturgeon bycatch are in black.

Federally managed catch share fisheries								
Sector	Subsector	Permit(s)	Gear(s)	Target(s)	Vessel length (m)	Depth (m)	Management, 2002–10	Management, 2011–present
Limited entry (LE) trawl	LE trawl	LE permit <sup>s</sup> with trawl endorsement	Bottom trawl after 01/01/2011, Hook-and-line, Pot	Groundfish assemblage	11–29	Wide range	Cumulative two-month trip limits; depth-based closures; 14–23% observer coverage	Individual fishing quotas (IFQ); 100% observer coverage
	LE California halibut	CA halibut permit <sup>b</sup> and LE permit with trawl endorsement <sup>a</sup>	Bottom trawl	CA halibut <sup>c</sup>	9–22	<55	Cumulative two-month trip-limits; depth-based closures; 3–23% observer coverage	IFQ; 100% observer coverage
At-sea hake	Mothership catcher vessel (MSCV)	LE permit with MSCV endorsement <sup>a</sup>	Midwater trawl	Pacific hake <sup>d</sup>	26–45 <sup>e</sup>	53–460 <sup>e</sup>	Seasonal quotas for target and bycatch species of concern; 100% observer coverage	IFQ; seasonal; 100% observer coverage
	Catcher–processor (CP)	LE permit with CP endorsement <sup>a</sup>	Midwater trawl	Pacific hake	82–115	60–570	Seasonal quotas for target and bycatch species of concern; 100% observer coverage	IFQ; seasonal; 100% observer coverage
	Tribal	n/a	Midwater trawl	Pacific hake	<38	53–460	Tribal	100% observer coverage
Shoreside hake	n/a	LE permit with trawl endorsement <sup>a</sup>	Midwater trawl	Pacific hake	17–29	Wide range	Seasonal quotas for target and bycatch species of concern; electronic monitoring	IFQ; seasonal; 100% observer coverage
Other federally managed fisheries								
Sector	Subsector	Permit(s)	Gear(s)	Target(s)	Vessel length (m)	Depth (m)	Management, 2002–present	
Non-nearshore fixed gear	Sablefish endorsed	LE permit with fixed gear endorsement <sup>a</sup> and sablefish quota	Longline, Pot	Sablefish <sup>f</sup>	11–32	>145	Sablefish tier quotas; seven-month season; 9–27% observer coverage	
	Sablefish nonendorsed (a.k.a. zero tier)	LE permit with fixed gear endorsement <sup>a</sup> ; no sablefish quota	Longline, Pot	Sablefish, rockfish <sup>g</sup> and flatfish <sup>h</sup>	5–18	>145	Trip limits; 1–12% observer coverage	

Table 1-1 (continued). Generalized descriptions of U.S. West Coast fisheries observed by WCGOP and A-SHOP.

Other federally managed fisheries							
Sector	Subsector	Permit(s)	Gear(s)	Target(s)	Vessel length (m)	Depth (m)	Management, 2002–present
Non-nearshore fixed gear	Open access (OA)	n/a	Longline, Pot	Sablefish, other groundfish	3–30	>64	Trip limits; 1–6% observer coverage
State-managed fisheries							
Sector	Permit(s)		Gear(s)	Target(s)	Vessel length (m)	Depth (m)	Management
OA California halibut	CA halibut permit <sup>b</sup>		Bottom trawl	California halibut	9–22	<55	All fishing occurs within CA waters, most in the California Halibut Trawl Grounds where minimum mesh sizes, seven-month season, and minimum size requirements hold; 1–16% observer coverage
Nearshore fixed gear <sup>i</sup>	CA or OR state nearshore permits and endorsements		Variety of hand lines, pot gear, stick gear, rod and reel	Rockfish, cabezon, <sup>j</sup> greenling <sup>k</sup>	3–15	<110 (usually <55 in OR waters)	Federal and CA or OR state nearshore regulations; area closures; two-month trip limits; minimum size limits; 2–8% observer coverage
Pink shrimp	WA, OR, or CA state pink shrimp permits		Shrimp trawl	Pink shrimp <sup>l</sup>	11.5–33	91–256	WA, OR, or CA state pink shrimp regulations; Bycatch Reduction Devices required; trip limits on groundfish landed; 4–14% observer coverage

<sup>a</sup> A.k.a. LE permit. All LE permits are issued by federal agency (NOAA).

<sup>b</sup> Issued by the state of California.

<sup>c</sup> *Paralichthys californicus*.

<sup>d</sup> *Merluccius productus*.

<sup>e</sup> Average values for catcher vessels delivering catch to motherships.

<sup>f</sup> *Anoplopoma fimbria*.

<sup>g</sup> *Sebastes* spp.

<sup>h</sup> *Pleuronectiformes*.

<sup>i</sup> The state of Washington does not conduct a nearshore fishery.

<sup>j</sup> *Scorpaenichthys marmoratus*.

<sup>k</sup> Hexagrammidae.

<sup>l</sup> *Pandalus jordani*.

## Limited entry and individual fishing quota bottom trawl GSI table

Table 1-2. Summary of expanded bycatch numbers of green sturgeon in LE and IFQ bottom trawl sectors by state. Estimates of Southern DPS (SDPS) and Northern DPS (NDPS) bycatch are calculated based on individual assignments of genetic stock identification (GSI) and GSI proportions by catch areas (48% for WA and OR, 96% for CA). The LE sector was active 2002–10, and the IFQ sector was active 2011–17.

Year	CA SDPS	CA NDPS	CA total	OR SDPS	OR NDPS	OR total	WA SDPS	WA NDPS	WA total	SDPS total	NDPS + SDPS total
2002	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.6	7.3	13.9	3.5	3.8	7.2	10.1	21.1
2003	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2004	4.5	0.2	4.7	2.5	2.7	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.0	10.0
2005	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.4	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	4.5
2006	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2007	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	2.4	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.2	5.5
2008	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
2009	5.4	0.2	5.5	17.6	19.9	37.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.0	43.1
2010	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	3.1	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	8.0
2011	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.4	17.9	38.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.4	38.4
2012	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.7	10.8	21.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.7	21.5
2013	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	5.4	10.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9	10.3
2014	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.5	24.0	39.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.5	39.5
2015	1.0	0.0	1.0	2.4	2.6	5.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4	6.1
2016	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.9	13.6	25.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.9	25.5
2017	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.1	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	2.0

## At-sea hake GSI table

Table 1-3. Summary of expanded bycatch numbers of green sturgeon in the at-sea hake fishery. Estimates of Southern DPS (SDPS) and Northern DPS (NDPS) bycatch are calculated based on GSI proportions by catch area (48% for WA and OR, 96% for CA). For simplicity, years and sectors without green sturgeon bycatch are not shown.

Year	Sector	SDPS total	NDPS + SDPS total
2005	At-sea tribal	0.48	1
2006	Mothership	0.96	2

## Limited entry trawl bycatch table

Table 1-4. Observed and fleetwide total expanded numbers of green sturgeon bycatch from the LE bottom trawl fishery, 2002–10. Asterisks (\*) signify confidential strata with fewer than three observed vessels. Confidence intervals (CIs) in years with no bycatch are denoted as *n/a*.

State	Year	Season	Observed bycatch	Observed groundfish landings (mt)	Fleet-total groundfish landings (mt)	Groundfish landings sampled (%)	Bycatch ratio	Lower CI of ratio	Upper CI of ratio	Fleet-total bycatch	Lower CI of bycatch	Upper CI of bycatch
WA	2002	winter	0	297.0	1,276.5	23.3	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2002	summer	1	142.4	1,032.7	13.8	0.01	0	0.03	7	1	27
WA	2003	winter	0	124.3	1,265.9	9.8	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2003	summer	0	56.4	647.9	8.7	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2004	winter	0	335.7	878.8	38.2	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2004	summer	0	179.0	902.5	19.8	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2005	winter	0	167.9	977.1	17.2	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2005	summer	0	408.6	1,932.8	21.1	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2006	winter	0	89.1	511.3	17.4	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2006	summer	0	276.4	1,194.6	23.1	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2007	winter	0	166.0	701.0	23.7	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2007	summer	0	60.7	813.1	7.5	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2008	winter	*	*	767.0	*	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2008	summer	0	292.1	832.7	35.1	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2009	winter	0	352.0	1,355.8	26.0	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2009	summer	0	384.0	1,200.4	32.0	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2010	winter	0	280.9	1,230.6	22.8	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
WA	2010	summer	0	221.7	882.4	25.1	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2002	winter	1	579.8	4,070.7	14.2	0.00	0	0.01	7	1	24
OR	2002	summer	1	490.8	3,376.9	14.5	0.00	0	0.01	7	1	19
OR	2003	winter	0	801.5	4,177.5	19.2	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2003	summer	0	551.2	4,369.5	12.6	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2004	winter	0	1,181.1	4,372.8	27.0	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2004	summer	1	989.3	5,201.2	19.0	0.00	0	0.00	5	1	17
OR	2005	winter	0	1,204.2	4,669.5	25.8	0.00	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2005	summer	1	1,179.6	5,348.4	22.1	0.00	0	0.00	5	1	14

Table 1-4 (continued). Observed and fleetwide total expanded numbers of green sturgeon bycatch from the LE bottom trawl fishery, 2002–10.

State	Year	Season	Observed bycatch	Observed groundfish landings (mt)	Fleet-total groundfish landings (mt)	Groundfish landings sampled (%)	Bycatch ratio	Lower CI of ratio	Upper CI of ratio	Fleet- total bycatch	Lower CI of bycatch	Upper CI of bycatch
OR	2006	winter	0	801.9	4,070.1	19.7	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2006	summer	0	1,123.5	6,151.2	18.3	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2007	winter	0	851.2	5,864.9	14.5	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2007	summer	1	1,114.2	6,147.7	18.1	0	0	0.00	6	1	18
OR	2008	winter	0	1,335.7	7,522.1	17.8	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2008	summer	0	1,820.7	7,360.1	24.7	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2009	winter	3	2,167.9	8,834.2	24.5	0	0	0.00	12	3	41
OR	2009	summer	6	1,858.5	7,846.9	23.7	0	0	0.01	25	6	67
OR	2010	winter	0	903.9	7,445.9	12.1	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
OR	2010	summer	2	1,850.6	7,392.4	25.0	0	0	0.00	8	2	20
CA	2002	winter	0	462.7	3,700.6	12.5	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2002	summer	0	523.5	3,856.6	13.6	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2003	winter	0	333.4	2,873.1	11.6	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2003	summer	0	566.9	4,051.9	14.0	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2004	winter	0	734.8	2,186.7	33.6	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2004	summer	1	755.8	3,539.1	21.4	0	0	0.00	5	1	15
CA	2005	winter	0	496.7	2,473.1	20.1	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2005	summer	0	585.8	3,019.9	19.4	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2006	winter	0	365.4	1,911.2	19.1	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2006	summer	0	590.8	2,935.1	20.1	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2007	winter	0	424.5	2,374.3	17.9	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2007	summer	0	692.2	3,674.6	18.8	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2008	winter	0	555.6	3,099.5	17.9	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2008	summer	0	648.5	3,340.9	19.4	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2009	winter	0	548.4	2,829.8	19.4	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2009	summer	1	636.6	3,517.7	18.1	0	0	0.00	6	1	18
CA	2010	winter	0	203.5	2,131.0	9.5	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2010	summer	0	581.9	3,051.5	19.1	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a

## Individual fishing quota trawl bycatch table

Table 1-5. Observed and fleetwide total expanded numbers of green sturgeon bycatch from the IFQ bottom trawl fishery, 2011–17. Note that the IFQ fisheries are sampled at close to 100%.

State	Year	Observed bycatch	Observed groundfish landings (mt)	Fleet-total groundfish landings (mt)	Groundfish landings sampled (%)	Estimated bycatch from unsampled catch	Fleet-total bycatch
WA	2011	0	1,828.5	1,849.9	98.8	0.0	0.0
WA	2012	0	2,092.4	2,123.2	98.6	0.0	0.0
WA	2013	0	1,478.0	1,479.7	99.9	0.0	0.0
WA	2014	0	723.0	725.7	99.6	0.0	0.0
WA	2015	0	479.6	479.6	100.0	0.0	0.0
WA	2016	0	451.0	451.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
WA	2017	0	834.0	834.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
OR	2011	37	10,557.3	10,637.2	99.2	1.4	38.4
OR	2012	21	10,403.7	10,469.3	99.4	0.5	21.5
OR	2013	10	12,000.7	12,035.7	99.7	0.3	10.3
OR	2014	39	10,126.0	10,184.0	99.4	0.5	39.5
OR	2015	5	10,970.0	11,019.7	99.5	0.1	5.1
OR	2016	25	12,055.9	12,098.6	99.6	0.5	25.5
OR	2017	2	12,116.4	12,127.7	99.9	0.0	2.0
CA	2011	0	4,567.1	4,572.4	99.9	0.0	0.0
CA	2012	0	4,453.3	4,461.7	99.8	0.0	0.0
CA	2013	0	5,059.0	5,072.7	99.7	0.0	0.0
CA	2014	0	4,910.1	4,934.7	99.5	0.0	0.0
CA	2015	1	4,139.9	4,142.6	99.9	0.0	1.0
CA	2016	0	2,353.2	2,353.2	100.0	0.0	0.0
CA	2017	0	2,396.5	2,398.6	99.9	0.0	0.0

## At-sea hake bycatch table

Table 1-6. Observed and expanded bycatch numbers of green sturgeon from the at-sea hake fishery, 2002–17. Note that this fishery is sampled at close to 100%. The tribal mothership sector did not participate in this fishery after 2012. Asterisks (\*) signify confidential strata with fewer than three observed vessels.

Year	Sector	Observed bycatch	Fleetwide expanded bycatch	Number sampled tows	Sampled hake landings (mt)	% tows sampled
2002	Catcher-processor	0	0	556	36,332.9	99.5
2003	Catcher-processor	0	0	766	41,468.6	99.7
2004	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,492	72,858.7	99.4
2005	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,332	78,497.5	99.6
2006	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,488	78,246.3	99.4
2007	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,566	72,898.1	99.3
2008	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,864	107,754.4	98.8
2009	Catcher-processor	0	0	863	34,590.8	99.4
2010	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,063	54,217.3	99.5
2011	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,530	71,336.7	98.8
2012	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,100	55,522.6	99.4
2013	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,439	78,004.8	98.6
2014	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,683	103,171.3	99.2
2015	Catcher-processor	0	0	1,503	68,435.2	98.9
2016	Catcher-processor	0	0	2,188	108,780.6	99.2
2017	Catcher-processor	0	0	2,143	137,104.5	99.3
2002	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	573	26,502.9	99.8
2003	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	522	25,332.9	97.4
2004	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	569	24,010.1	99.6
2005	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,038	48,600.6	99.8
2006	Non-tribal mothership	2	2	1,243	54,138.8	96.9
2007	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,135	47,276.3	99.0
2008	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,346	57,687.4	99.8
2009	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	597	24,066.4	99.5
2010	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	908	35,726.9	100.0
2011	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,246	49,970.6	99.8
2012	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	931	38,042.1	98.1
2013	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,249	52,348.3	99.4
2014	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,288	61,793.7	98.5
2015	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	625	27,544.5	97.7
2016	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,550	64,597.1	99.0
2017	Non-tribal mothership	0	0	1,287	65,358.5	98.3
2002	Tribal mothership	0	0	625	21,629.0	98.7
2003	Tribal mothership	0	0	537	19,430.8	99.4
2004	Tribal mothership	0	0	632	23,511.4	100.0
2005	Tribal mothership	1	1	632	23,561.6	99.8
2006	Tribal mothership	0	0	154	5,405.4	96.2



Table 1-6 (continued). Observed and expanded bycatch numbers of green sturgeon from the at-sea hake fishery, 2002–17.

Year	Sector	Observed bycatch	Fleetwide expanded bycatch	Number sampled tows	Sampled hake landings (mt)	% tows sampled
2007	Tribal mothership	0	0	156	5,129.4	100.0
2008	Tribal mothership	0	0	380	14,977.3	99.5
2009	Tribal mothership	0	0	403	13,469.4	99.8
2010	Tribal mothership	0	0	516	16,206.2	100.0
2011	Tribal mothership	0	0	228	6,146.9	100.0
2012	Tribal mothership	*	0	*	*	*

## Generalized additive models results

Table 1-7. Results from the binomial generalized additive model of green sturgeon encounter probability in the LE/IFQ trawl fishery.

Term	Estimated degree of freedom (DF)	Reference DF	Statistic	P value
<i>s(year)</i>	2.748	9	31.978	<0.001
<i>s(average tow depth)</i>	3.347	9	118.604	<0.001
<i>s(SST)</i>	0.000	9	0.000	0.572
<i>s(day)</i>	3.960	9	93.691	<0.001
<i>s(latitude)</i>	0.000	9	0.000	0.405

Table 1-8. Results from the negative binomial generalized additive model of green sturgeon bycatch counts in the LE/IFQ trawl fishery.

Term	Estimated degree of freedom (DF)	Reference DF	Statistic	P value
<i>s(year)</i>	2.529	9	34.699	<0.001
<i>s(average tow depth)</i>	3.394	9	133.464	<0.001
<i>s(SST)</i>	1.730	9	4.048	0.064
<i>s(day)</i>	4.319	9	53.662	<0.001
<i>s(latitude)</i>	0.000	9	0.000	0.474

# State Fisheries

## Introduction

State-managed fisheries do not fall under the BiOp (NMFS 2012) for green sturgeon. We provide information on them here because they are important from a conservation perspective, but note that recommendations to PFMC regarding green sturgeon under the BiOp should not include these fisheries. For further background on green sturgeon, West Coast groundfish fisheries, the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP), and the BiOp, see [Federal Fisheries](#).

## State sectors that encountered green sturgeon

This section includes information on the limited entry (LE) and open access (OA) California halibut fishery and the California nearshore fixed gear fishery. The nearshore fixed gear and OA California halibut sectors are state-permitted and are therefore not regulated under the Pacific Coast Groundfish FMP. The LE California halibut sector requires both a California halibut permit and an LE federal trawl groundfish permit, making it both federally and state-permitted. However, it is not covered by the BiOp and is therefore included in this section. The state of California requested that WCGOP observe the California halibut fishery and report discarded catch, much of which is incidentally caught groundfish and thus of interest to federal groundfish fisheries. No other state-managed fisheries covered by WCGOP encountered green sturgeon over 2002–17.

## Methods

WCGOP classifies vessels in the California halibut fishery as belonging to either the LE or OA sector and provides observer coverage for both sectors. Vessels in the LE sector possess both a federal LE groundfish permit and a state-issued California halibut fishing permit. This sector has not been active since 2013. Vessels in the OA sector only possess state-issued CA halibut fishing permits. The LE sector exists as a portion of the LE/IFQ groundfish bottom trawl sector, so WCGOP defines LE California halibut data based on the following criteria: 1) the tow target was California halibut, or 2) the tow target was nearshore mix, sand sole, or other flatfish, and took place in less than 30 fth south of lat 40.167°N. All tows in the observer data that met at least one of the above requirements were included in the LE California halibut bottom trawl dataset. WCGOP randomly selects the fishing vessels in the OA California halibut sector for separate observer coverage. Since 2011, the LE California halibut sector has operated under the IFQ fishery rules with 100% observer coverage, though we again note that this sector has not been active since 2013.

Both California and Oregon have state-permitted nearshore fixed gear fisheries. Green sturgeon have not been observed in the Oregon fishery, so we only report estimates for the California fishery, which had one instance of observed bycatch in 2017 and none in other years. We estimate total bycatch using the ratio approach described in [Federal Fisheries](#); however, the low coverage rate (averaging 4.4% of target landings) and low green sturgeon encounter rate in this fishery may result in inaccurate estimates for this fishery (Babcock et al. 2003).

For further information on data sources, bycatch estimation, models relating green sturgeon bycatch to environmental predictors, and other methods, see [Federal Fisheries](#). Note that for the purposes of modeling encounter probability and bycatch counts, we restricted the data to tows north of lat 37.150°N with depths <40 fth. We imposed these restrictions to exclude habitats where the fishery is very unlikely to encounter green sturgeon.

## Results and Discussion

### Bycatch overview

Between 2002 and 2017, green sturgeon were encountered in the following state-managed sectors and years:

- California nearshore fixed gear fishery, 2017.
- LE and OA California halibut bottom trawl fishery, 2002–17.

Bycatch was highest in the California halibut bottom trawl fishery, which encountered an estimated 121–665 green sturgeon annually over the most recent five-year period (2013–17). Only one instance of bycatch was observed in the California nearshore fishery between 2002 and 2017. Estimates of expanded green sturgeon bycatch by sector are shown in Figure 2-1.

Fishing effort in the LE/OA California halibut fishery was highest outside the San Francisco Bay, with some fishing occurring further south (Figure 2-2). Green sturgeon bycatch in this fishery primarily occurred close to shore outside the San Francisco Bay (Figure 2-2).

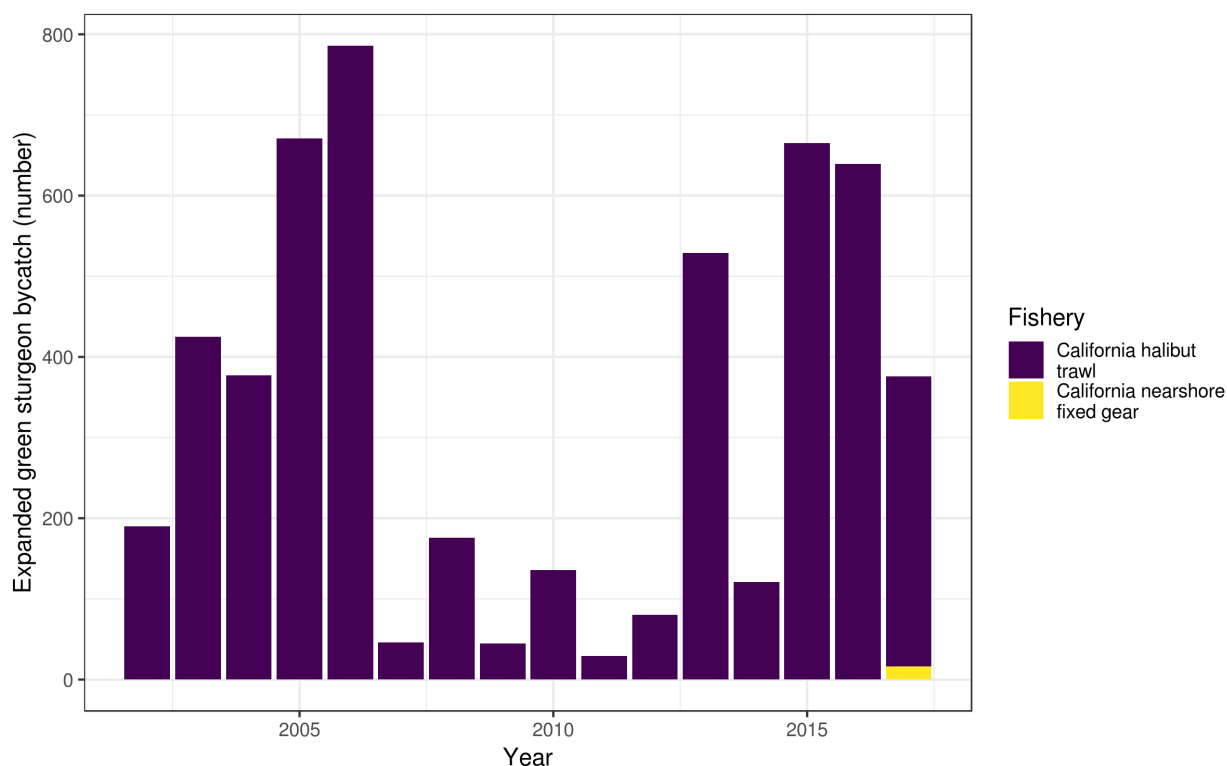


Figure 2-1. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (number of individuals) for all state sectors covered by WCGOP. Estimates for the LE and OA California halibut sectors are shown combined.

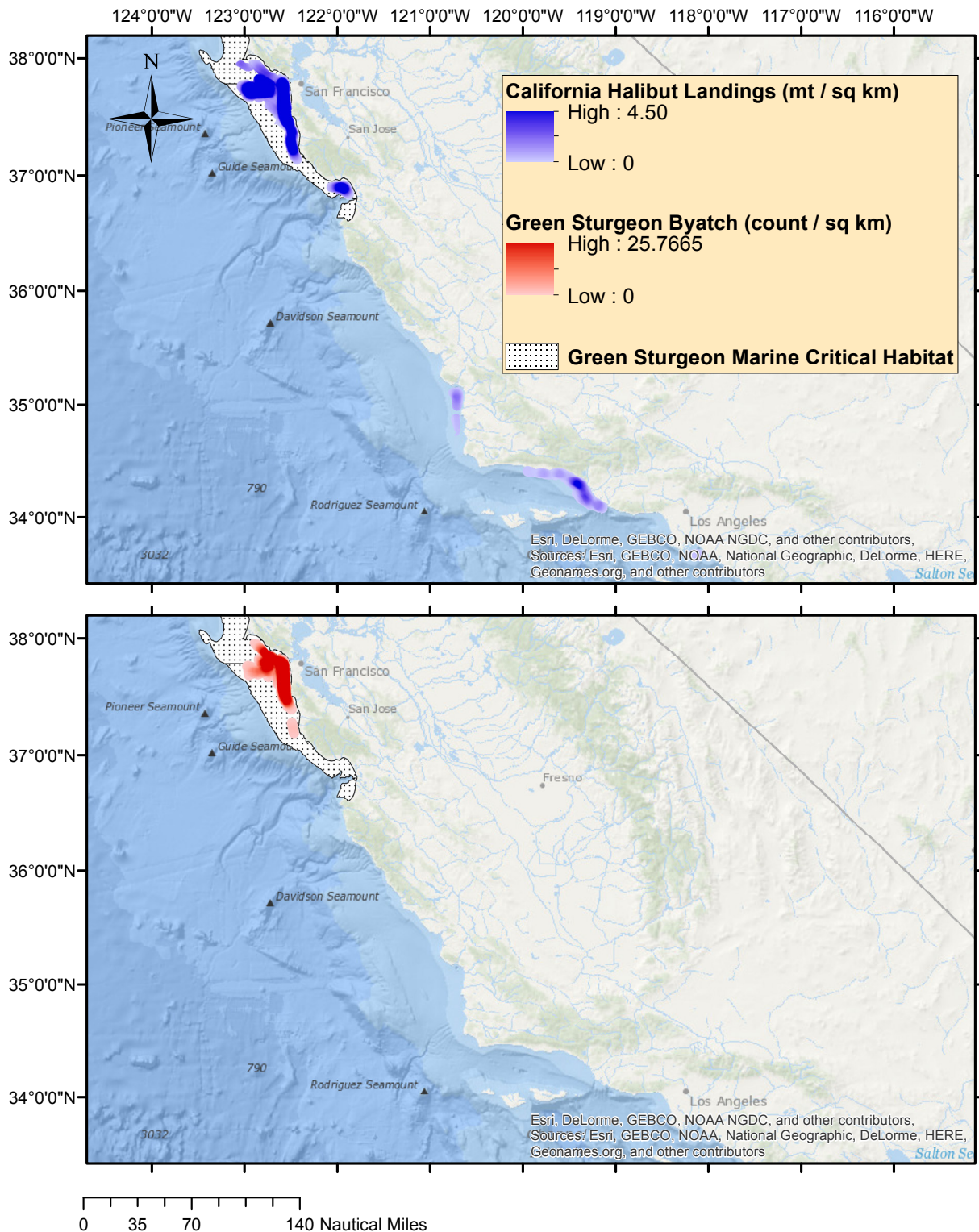


Figure 2-2. Map of observed fishing locations (upper panel) and observed green sturgeon bycatch locations (lower panel) in the LE and OA California halibut bottom trawl sectors, based on observer data from 2002–17. Observer data are aggregated to 1-km<sup>2</sup> cells. Fishing locations are weighted by fishing effort (landed weight of California halibut). Green sturgeon bycatch locations are weighted by number of green sturgeon in the defined spatial cells. Cells containing fewer than three vessels are not shown to maintain confidentiality.

## Genetic stock identification

The estimated numbers of Northern and Southern DPS individuals are shown in Figure 2-3. The California halibut fishery had the highest estimated Southern DPS bycatch, ranging from 118–641 in the past five years (Table 2-1). The California nearshore sector caught an estimated 16 Southern DPS individuals in 2017 only (Table 2-2). However, as noted elsewhere, the estimates for the California nearshore sector may be inaccurate due to low coverage and encounter rates.

### California halibut

Green sturgeon bycatch estimates in the LE and OA California halibut fishery are shown in Figures 2.4 (2002–10) and 2.5 (2011–17). To preserve confidentiality, the LE and OA sectors are combined across seasons from 2011–17, though note that the LE fishery was not active after 2013. Bycatch estimates, target landings, bycatch ratios, and coverage are presented in Tables 2-3 and 2-4.

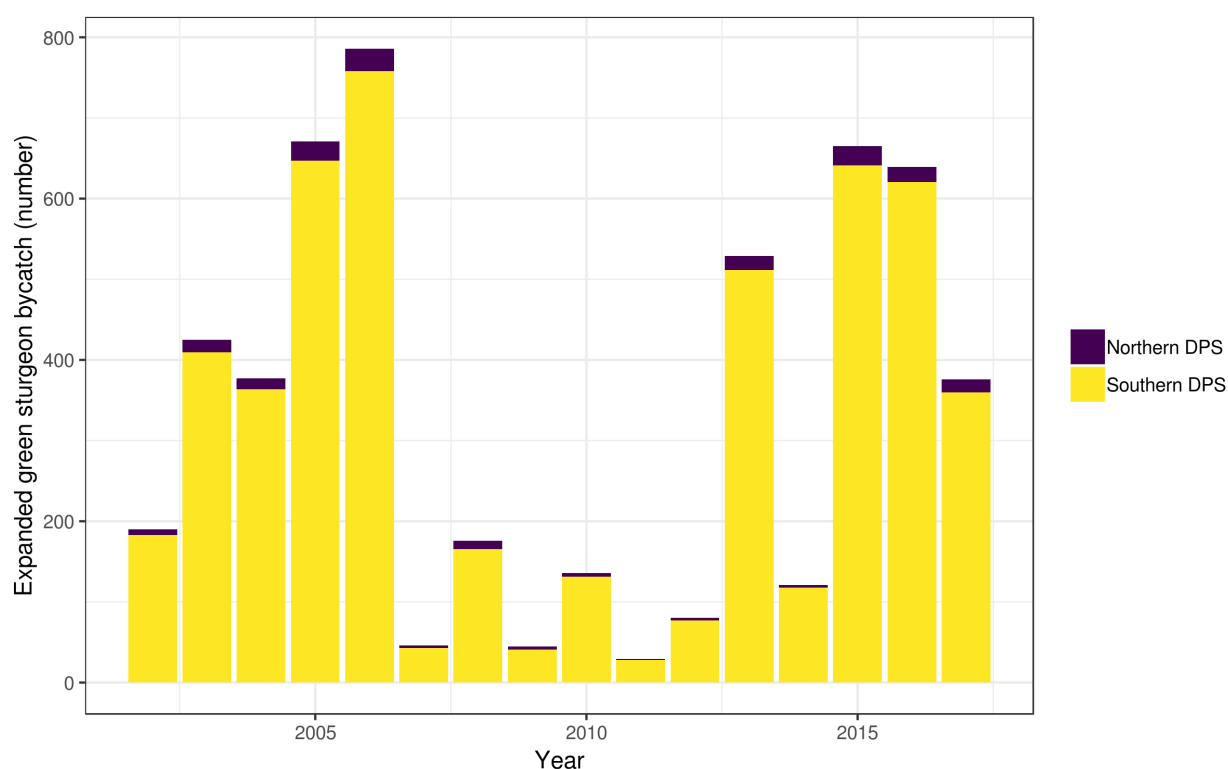


Figure 2-3. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (number of individuals) in state-managed groundfish fisheries by distinct population segment (DPS). Estimates of bycatch by DPS are calculated based on individual assignments of genetic stock identification (GSI) and GSI proportions by catch areas (48% Southern DPS for Washington and Oregon, 96% Southern DPS for California).

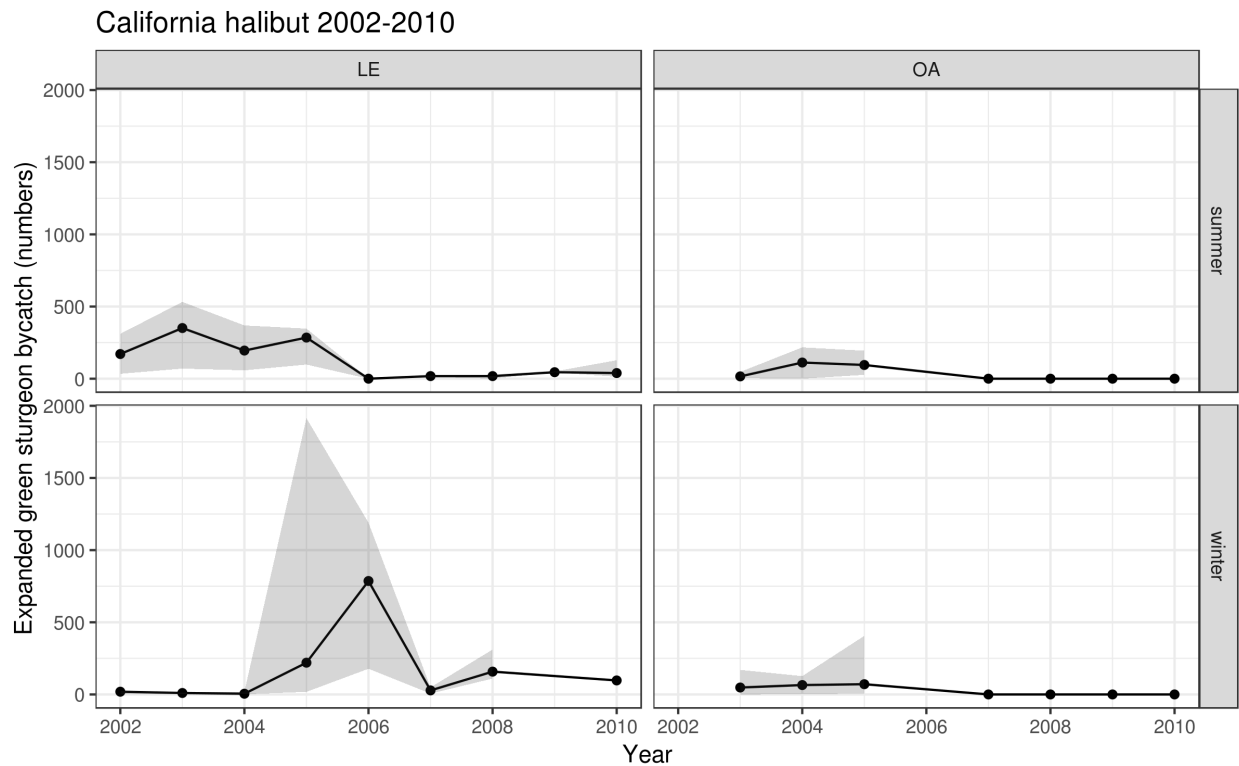


Figure 2-4. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (numbers of individuals) in the LE and OA California halibut fisheries by time of year, 2002–10. Winter is November–April and summer is May–October. Gray shading represents bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals.

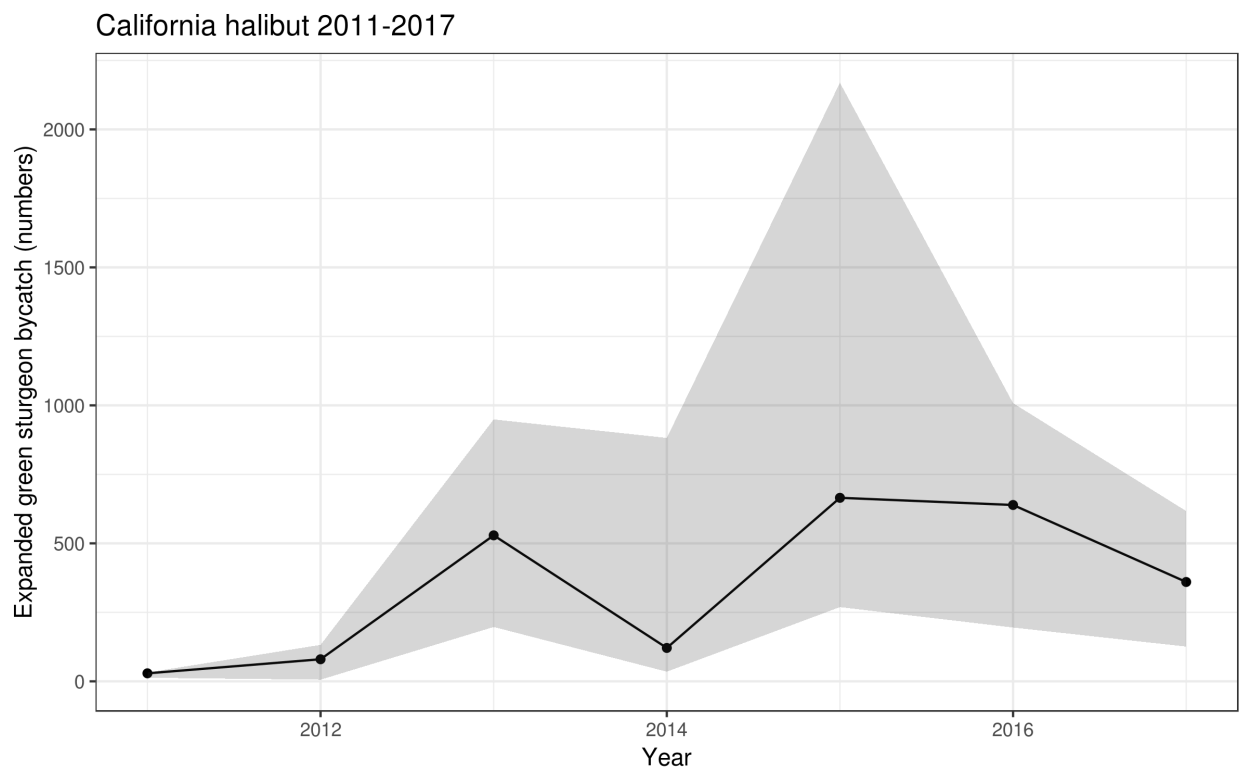


Figure 2-5. Green sturgeon bycatch estimates (numbers of individuals) in the combined LE and OA California halibut fisheries, 2011–17. Gray shading represents bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals.



## California nearshore fixed gear

The first instance of observed green sturgeon bycatch in the California nearshore fixed gear fishery occurred in 2017, consisting of a single individual caught with hook and line gear. The observation occurred near the mouth of San Francisco Bay (between lat 37.2°N and 38.2°N), in summer. The observer noted that the fish dropped off the line before being brought on board, so no biological data were taken. The expanded green sturgeon bycatch estimate for 2017 was 16 individuals (95% CI, 1–58 individuals), and zero for all other years. Table 2-5 contains further information about retained groundfish catch, observer coverage, and bycatch ratios. Note that the combination of low encounter rates and low observer coverage is likely to result in inaccurate bycatch estimates when ratio estimators are used (Babcock et al. 2003). Fewer than 10% of groundfish landings are typically covered by observers in this fishery (Table 2-5), and the historical lack of observed green sturgeon bycatch indicates low encounter rates. Thus, the expanded bycatch numbers estimated for this fishery should be interpreted with caution.

## Tow depth and green sturgeon bycatch

Green sturgeon bycatch generally occurred in trawl depths of <40 fth in the California halibut trawl fishery, and was most common at depths of <10 fth (Figure 2-6). Tows in this fishery averaged  $19 \pm 9$  fth, indicating that most tows in this fishery occur in the depth range where green sturgeon may be encountered.

## Length frequencies

Observed green sturgeon fork lengths ranged from 59–213 cm in the California halibut sectors (Figure 2-7). The majority of individuals were <140 cm (the estimated length at maturity), indicating that bycatch is dominated by subadults.

## Length and depth

There was no apparent relationship between green sturgeon length and tow depth in the California halibut trawl fishery (Figure 2-8).

## Seasonal patterns

In the California halibut trawl fishery, the average bycatch ratios were highest in the spring (April–May) and fall/winter (September–December; Figure 2-9). They were lowest in late winter (January–March).

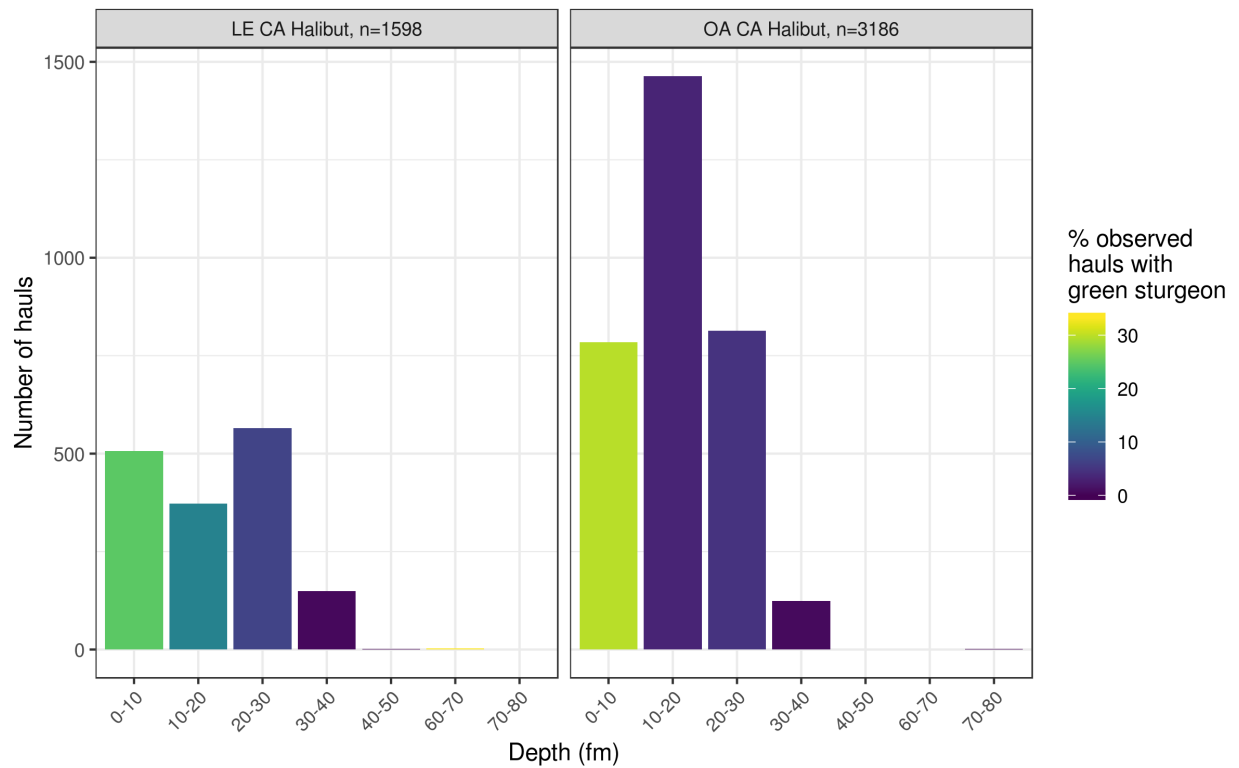


Figure 2-6. Distribution of haul depths and percent of hauls with green sturgeon in the LE and OA California halibut bottom trawl fisheries, 2002–17.

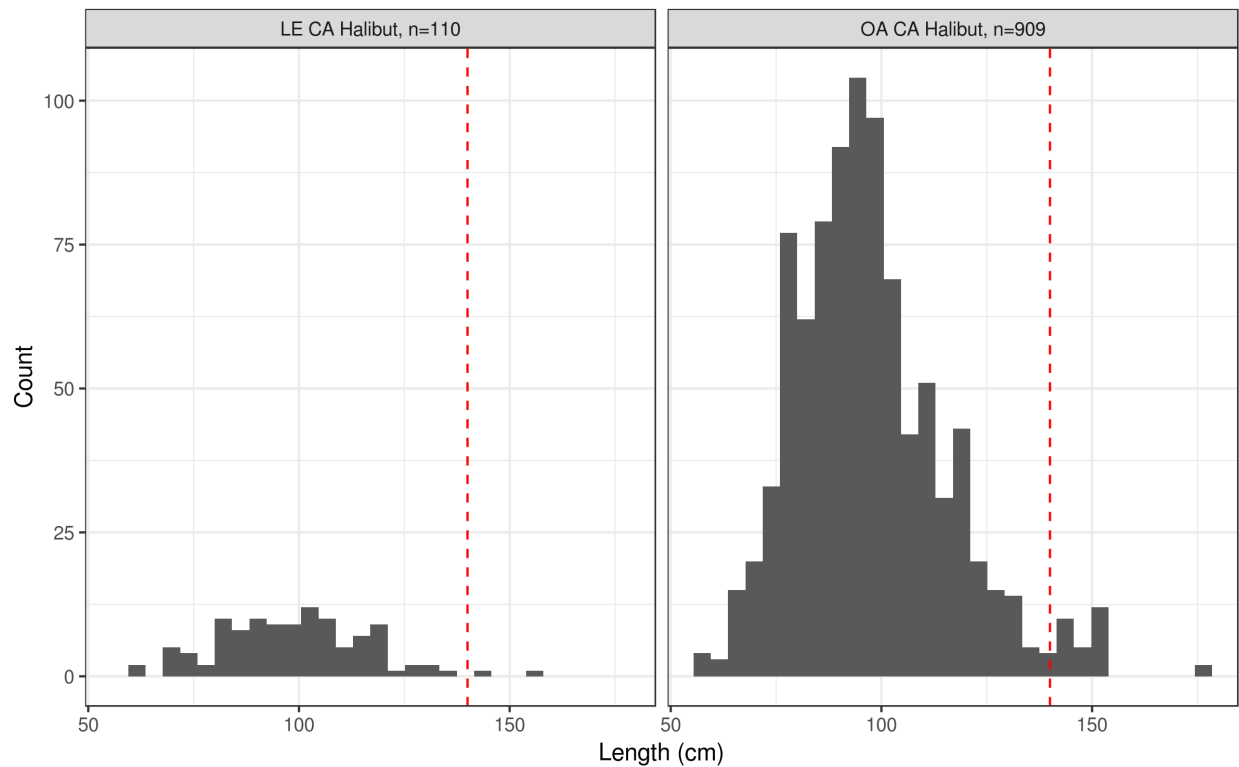


Figure 2-7. Distribution of green sturgeon lengths in the LE and OA California halibut bottom trawl fishery, 2002–17. Dashed red line indicates boundary between subadult and adult sizes (140 cm).



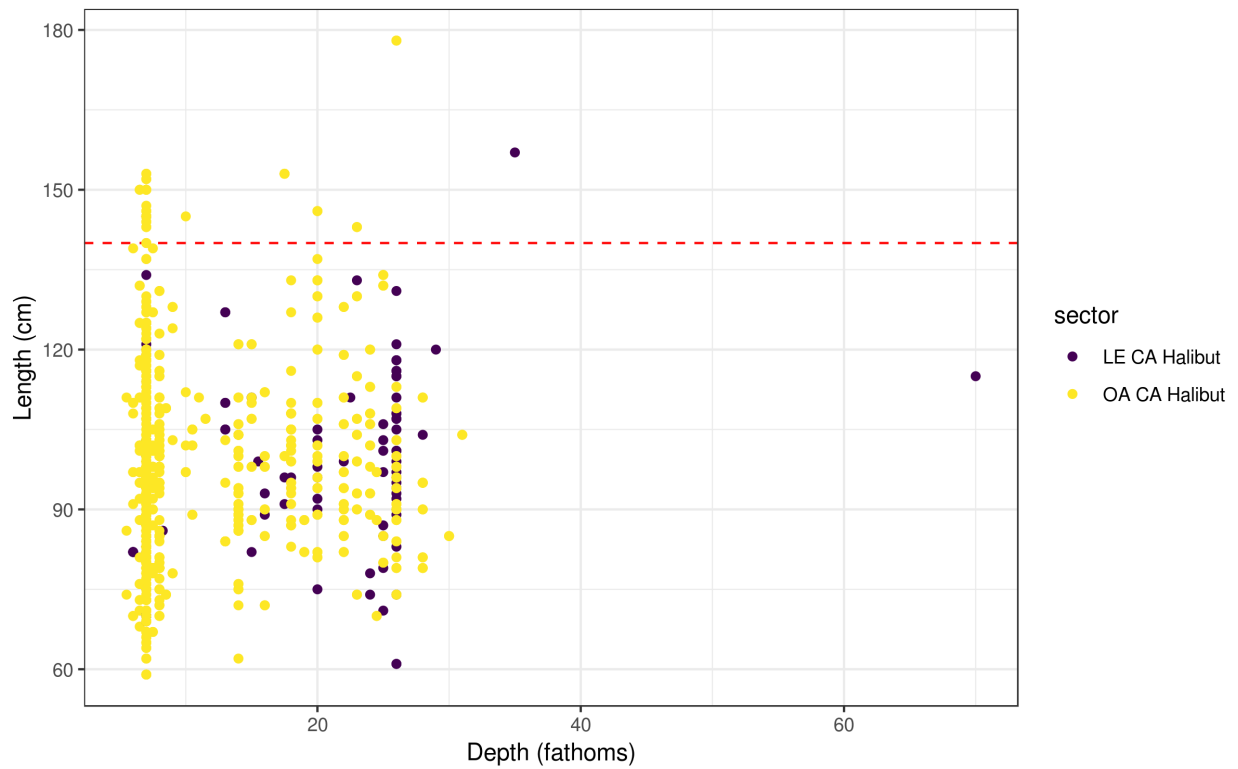


Figure 2-8. Scatter plot of green sturgeon lengths over fishing depths at capture in the LE and OA California halibut bottom trawl sectors, 2002–17. Dashed red line indicates boundary between subadult and adult sizes (140 cm).

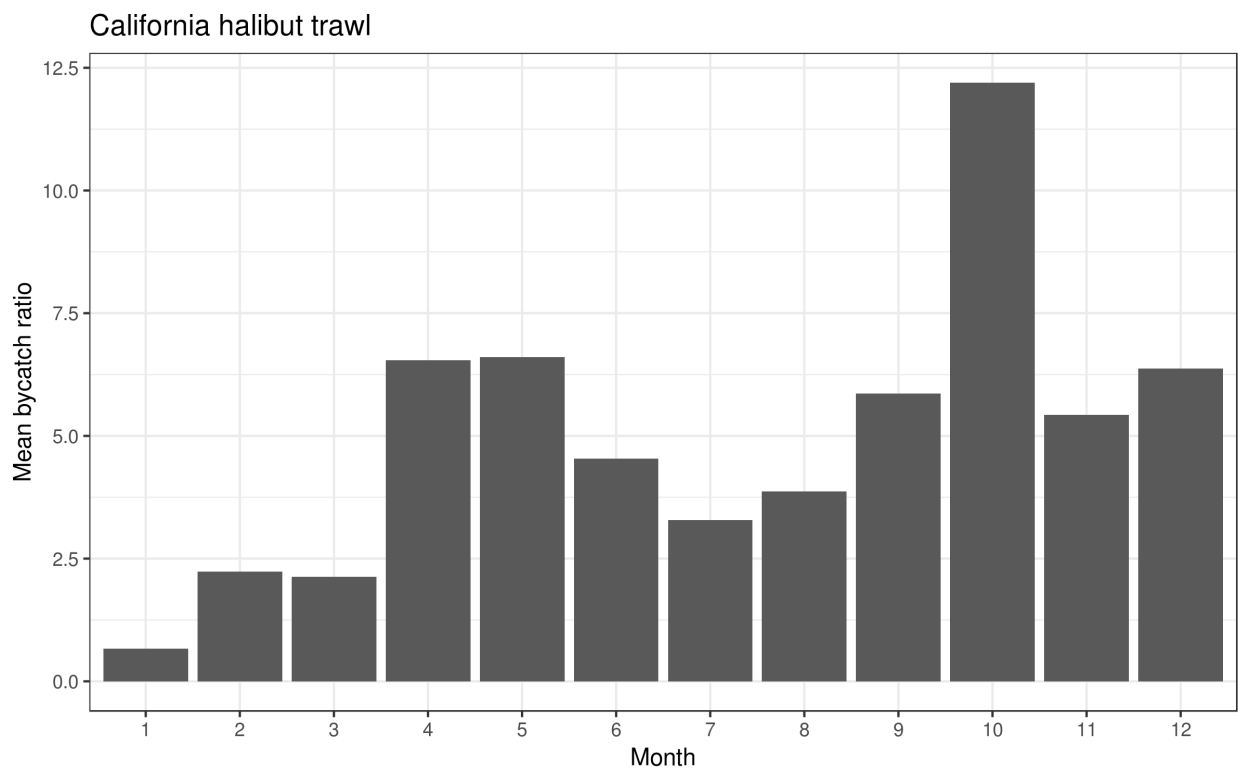


Figure 2-9. Mean bycatch ratio (number of green sturgeon caught divided by landed weight of California halibut) by month in the California halibut trawl fishery. OA and LE observations are combined.

## Environmental correlates of bycatch

In the California halibut fishery, tow depth, year, latitude, and Julian day had the largest impacts on green sturgeon bycatch in our models (Figures 2-10 and 2-11). SST had a smaller effect, and was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level in the negative binomial model. The results indicate that bycatch is likely to be highest in spring and fall at shallow tow depths near the mouth of San Francisco Bay. However, note that percent of deviance explained was only 26.6% for the binomial encounter model and 40.7% for the negative binomial count model, indicating fairly large amounts of unexplained variation in bycatch. For tables of model results, see Tables 2-6 and 2-7.

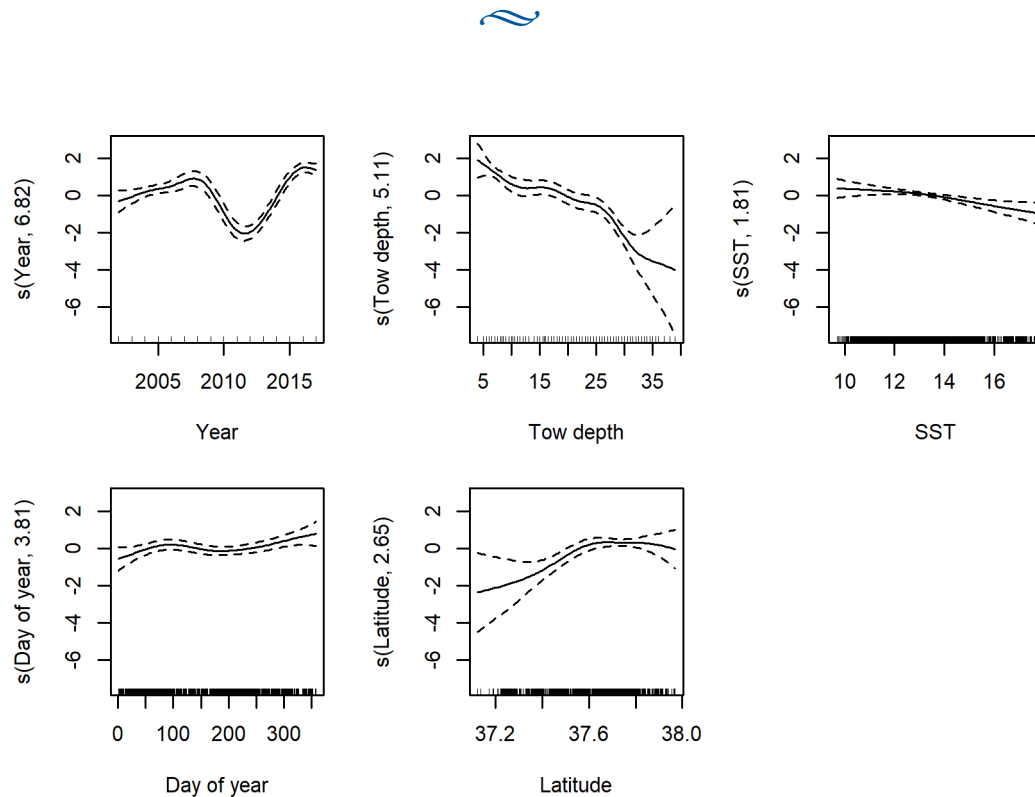


Figure 2-10. Estimated smooth functions for covariates in the binomial encounter probability model fit to California halibut trawl fishery data. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

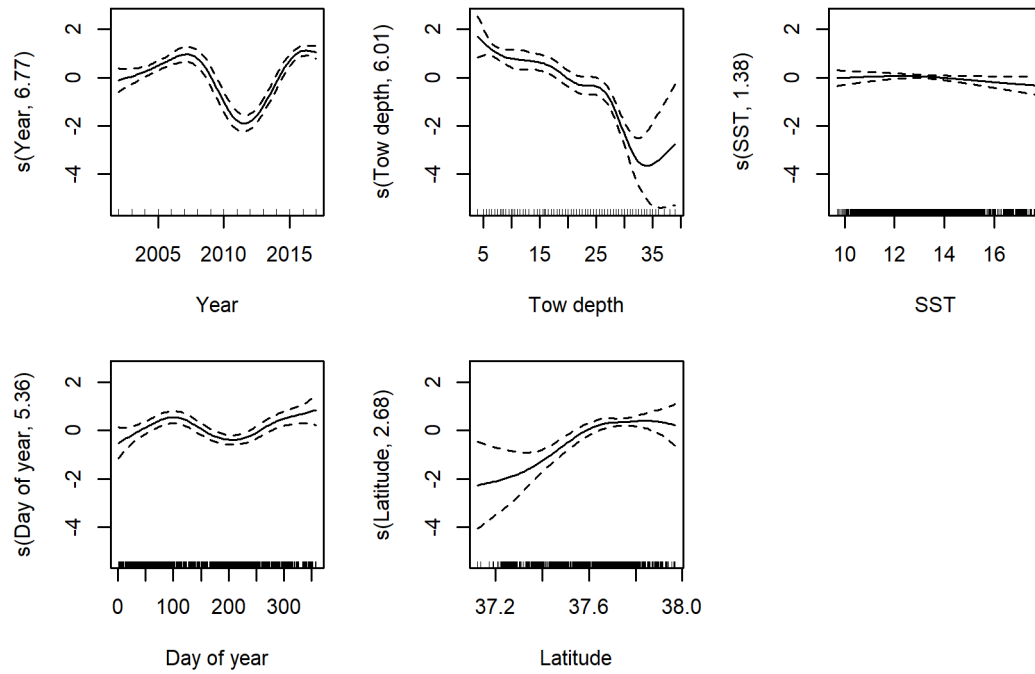


Figure 2-11. Estimated smooth functions for covariates in the negative binomial bycatch count model fit to California halibut trawl fishery data. Dashed lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

## Tables

### California halibut GSI table

Table 2-1. Summary of expanded fleetwide bycatch estimates of green sturgeon in the LE and OA California halibut sectors. 2011–17 values are reported combined across the sectors to maintain confidentiality. Dashes (—) signify strata with no observer coverage. Asterisks (\*) indicate strata that are reported as combined to preserve confidentiality. Estimates of Southern DPS (SDPS) bycatch are calculated based on genetic stock proportion (96%) of green sturgeon in California.

Year	LE NDPS + SDPS	OA NDPS + SDPS	LE NDPS	OA NDPS	LE SDPS	OA SDPS	SDPS total	NDPS + SDPS total
2002	190	—	6.8	—	183.2	—	183.2	190
2003	361	64	13.0	2.3	348.0	61.7	409.7	425
2004	200	177	7.2	6.4	192.8	170.6	363.4	377
2005	505	166	18.2	6.0	486.8	160.0	646.8	671
2006	786	—	28.3	—	757.7	—	757.7	786
2007	46	0	3.0	0.0	43.0	0.0	43.0	46
2008	176	0	10.7	0.0	165.3	0.0	165.3	176
2009	45	0	4.4	0.0	40.6	0.0	40.6	45
2010	136	0	4.9	0.0	131.1	0.0	131.1	136
2011	*	*	*	*	*	*	28.2	29
2012	*	*	*	*	*	*	77.3	80
2013	*	*	*	*	*	*	511.2	529
2014	*	*	*	*	*	*	117.5	121
2015	*	*	*	*	*	*	641.1	665
2016	*	*	*	*	*	*	620.5	639
2017	*	*	*	*	*	*	344.2	360

### California nearshore fixed gear GSI table

Table 2-2. Summary of expanded bycatch numbers of green sturgeon in the California nearshore fixed gear sector. Estimates of SDPS and NDPS bycatch are calculated based on GSI proportions by catch area (48% for WA and OR, 96% for CA). For simplicity, years and sectors without green sturgeon bycatch are not shown.

Year	SDPS total	NDPS + SDPS total
2017	15.6	16.2

## California halibut bycatch tables

Table 2-3. Observed bycatch numbers, bycatch ratios, and fleetwide total bycatch numbers of green sturgeon from the California halibut bottom trawl fishery, 2002–10. LE and OA sectors are shown separately. Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (CI) are provided for the bycatch estimates. Winter is November–April; summer is May–October. Asterisks (\*) signify strata with fewer than three observed vessels. Dashes (—) signify unobserved strata.

Sector	Year	Season	Observed bycatch	Observed CA halibut landings (mt)	Fleet-total CA halibut landings (mt)	CA halibut landings sampled (%)	Bycatch ratio	Lower CI of ratio	Upper CI of ratio	Fleet- total bycatch	Lower CI of bycatch	Upper CI of bycatch
LE	2002	winter	1	3.6	68.8	5.2	0.28	0.00	0.37	19	1	25
LE	2002	summer	*	*	36.4	*	4.69	0.93	8.55	171	34	311
LE	2003	winter	2	12.9	61.9	20.8	0.16	0.00	0.23	10	2	14
LE	2003	summer	50	6.2	43.6	14.2	8.05	1.61	12.19	351	70	532
LE	2004	winter	1	14.7	79.9	18.4	0.07	0.00	0.23	5	1	19
LE	2004	summer	58	16.8	56.5	29.8	3.45	0.00	6.53	195	58	369
LE	2005	winter	18	10.7	131.4	8.2	1.68	0.00	14.56	220	18	1,914
LE	2005	summer	98	19.8	57.4	34.4	4.95	1.58	6.04	285	98	347
LE	2006	winter	108	11.1	80.6	13.7	9.75	2.21	14.76	786	178	1,190
LE	2006	summer	0	3.2	38.9	8.3	0.00	0.00	0.00	0	0	0
LE	2007	winter	6	3.0	14.1	21.3	2.00	0.00	3.51	28	6	49
LE	2007	summer	10	2.4	4.5	54.2	4.09	0.00	5.36	18	10	24
LE	2008	winter	44	9.5	34.0	27.9	4.63	3.24	9.12	158	110	311
LE	2008	summer	1	0.1	2.4	5.6	7.60	0.00	7.93	18	1	19
LE	2009	winter	—	—	39.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
LE	2009	summer	18	2.9	7.3	39.8	6.21	5.88	6.87	45	43	50
LE	2010	winter	*	*	32.8	*	2.96	0.72	5.62	97	24	185
LE	2010	summer	*	*	21.2	*	1.86	0.68	6.01	39	14	128
OA	2002	winter	—	—	21.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
OA	2002	summer	—	—	14.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
OA	2003	winter	*	*	18.5	*	2.60	0.00	9.19	48	0	170
OA	2003	summer	4	1.8	7.3	25.5	2.16	0.00	6.48	16	4	47
OA	2004	winter	2	0.9	29.6	3.1	2.20	0.00	4.28	65	2	127
OA	2004	summer	*	*	41.2	*	2.71	0.00	5.27	112	0	217
OA	2005	winter	6	2.0	24.1	8.5	2.94	0.00	16.85	71	6	406
OA	2005	summer	*	*	40.4	*	2.35	0.00	4.79	95	27	194

Table 2-3 (continued). Observed bycatch numbers, bycatch ratios, and fleetwide total bycatch numbers of green sturgeon from the California halibut bottom trawl fishery, 2002–10.

Sector	Year	Season	Observed bycatch	Observed CA halibut landings (mt)	Fleet-total CA halibut landings (mt)	CA halibut landings sampled (%)	Bycatch ratio	Lower CI of ratio	Upper CI of ratio	Fleet-total bycatch	Lower CI of bycatch	Upper CI of bycatch
OA	2006	winter	—	—	18.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
OA	2006	summer	—	—	36.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
OA	2007	winter	0	0.8	8.2	10.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2007	summer	0	1.9	31.0	6.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2008	winter	0	0.9	21.5	4.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2008	summer	0	1.8	30.3	5.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2009	winter	*	*	37.4	*	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2009	summer	*	*	44.9	*	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2010	winter	0	0.7	28.0	2.7	0	0	0	0	0	0
OA	2010	summer	0	1.7	41.5	4.0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2-4. Observed bycatch numbers and fleetwide total expanded numbers of green sturgeon bycatch from the combined LE and OA California halibut bottom trawl sectors, 2011–17. Estimates for each sector were calculated separately, then summed to generate the fleetwide total expanded bycatch estimates across both sectors. The low number of vessels that participated in the LE sector (<3 vessels per year) resulted in the need to combine the LE and OA sectors' bycatch estimates and not report LE landings to maintain confidentiality. Since 2011, the LE sector has been 100% observed as part of the IFQ program, but no LE trips were made after 2013. Landings for the OA sector are given in metric tons. In years when the LE fishery was not active, the percent of landings sampled is denoted as *n/a*.

Year	LE + OA combined observed bycatch	LE + OA combined fleet-total bycatch	Lower CI of fleet-total bycatch	Upper CI of fleet-total bycatch	LE CA halibut landings sampled (%)	OA observed CA halibut landings (mt)	OA fleet-total CA halibut landings (mt)	OA CA halibut landings sampled (%)
2011	13	29	13	32	100	12.4	79.9	15.6
2012	6	80	6	132	100	3.5	55.8	6.3
2013	46	529	197	949	100	4.3	69.2	6.2
2014 <sup>a</sup>	27	121	35	882	n/a	18.1	81.4	22.3
2015 <sup>a</sup>	221	665	269	2,169	n/a	30.6	92.1	33.3
2016 <sup>a</sup>	195	639	195	1,008	n/a	27.3	89.6	30.5
2017 <sup>a</sup>	106	360	126	617	n/a	28.4	96.4	29.4

<sup>a</sup> LE sector not active.

## California nearshore fixed gear bycatch table

Table 2-5. Observed and expanded bycatch numbers of green sturgeon from the California nearshore fixed gear sector, 2002–17.

State	Year	Season	Observed bycatch	Observed nearshore landings (mt)	Fleet-total nearshore landings (mt)	Groundfish landings sampled (%)	Bycatch ratio	Fleet-total bycatch	Lower CI of bycatch	Upper CI of bycatch
CA	2002	summer	n/a	n/a	267.4	0.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CA	2002	winter	n/a	n/a	113.8	0.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CA	2003	summer	0	7.3	209.8	3.5	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2003	winter	0	0.8	46.3	1.7	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2004	summer	0	15.3	233.7	6.5	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2004	winter	0	8.0	56.9	14.0	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2005	summer	0	9.4	212.0	4.4	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2005	winter	0	3.6	67.5	5.3	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2006	summer	0	6.0	203.3	2.9	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2006	winter	0	2.4	54.2	4.3	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2007	summer	0	7.9	203.8	3.9	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2007	winter	0	4.0	69.7	5.7	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2008	summer	0	3.9	207.1	1.9	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2008	winter	0	2.7	86.6	3.2	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2009	summer	0	4.0	184.0	2.2	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2009	winter	0	2.7	75.7	3.5	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2010	summer	0	6.9	167.8	4.1	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2010	winter	0	0.1	51.1	0.2	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2011	summer	0	6.8	154.6	4.4	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2011	winter	0	1.6	61.4	2.7	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2012	summer	0	9.9	145.2	6.8	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2012	winter	0	2.0	55.0	3.6	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2013	summer	0	8.6	153.5	5.6	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2013	winter	0	3.0	66.0	4.6	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2014	summer	0	8.7	179.5	4.9	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2014	winter	0	2.7	65.0	4.2	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2015	summer	0	15.5	221.2	7.0	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2015	winter	0	7.3	109.8	6.7	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2016	summer	0	7.5	178.2	4.2	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2016	winter	0	5.7	69.4	8.2	0.0	0	n/a	n/a
CA	2017	summer	1	9.5	154.3	6.2	0.1	16	1	58
CA	2017	winter	0	2.7	53.8	4.9	0.0	0	n/a	n/a

## Generalized additive models results

Table 2-6. Results from the binomial generalized additive model of green sturgeon encounter probability in the California halibut trawl fishery.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Estimated degree of freedom (DF)</b>	<b>Reference DF</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>P value</b>
<i>s(year)</i>	6.823	9	238.826	<0.001
<i>s(average tow depth)</i>	5.109	9	108.001	<0.001
<i>s(SST)</i>	1.814	9	13.490	<0.001
<i>s(day)</i>	3.813	9	16.161	0.001
<i>s(latitude)</i>	2.645	9	20.025	<0.001

Table 2-7. Results from the negative binomial generalized additive model of green sturgeon bycatch counts in the California halibut trawl fishery.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Estimated degree of freedom (DF)</b>	<b>Reference DF</b>	<b>Statistic</b>	<b>P value</b>
<i>s(year)</i>	6.770	9	251.211	<0.001
<i>s(average tow depth)</i>	6.014	9	130.422	<0.001
<i>s(SST)</i>	1.381	9	3.268	0.067
<i>s(day)</i>	5.359	9	42.664	<0.001
<i>s(latitude)</i>	2.676	9	31.984	<0.001



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